

Conquering Dragons

by Transparent Existance

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Summary: Alvin makes his move to control the dragons, taking Hiccup with the help of an unknown ally. He's determined to break the boy, to know his secrets and make berk his own. Will Hiccup be able to hold out? my first HTTYD fic.

## 1. Chapter 1

\*\*Disclaimer:\*\* I dont own the rights to The show, book, or movie and am not intending to profit from this written work.

\*\*A/N:\*\* This is my first HTTYD fic, so if it isnt up to par, I do apologize. I've been forming this fic for months, but was unsure of how I wanted to go about it. It wasn't until the show came out, and introduced Mildew that my thoughts finally started to come together and take more concrete form. I'd always intended to have a character who was against the dragons, but the show made it much easier to portray. Anyway, I do hope that its enjoyable to those who choose to read it.

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Mildew walked through the familiar forests of Berk, the night as his ally. Living away from town had its advantages, no one was watching him. No one would notice his absence. He couldn't hide the smile from his thin lips as he thought about what he intended to do. Soon, there would be no more Dragons, no more Hiccup.

The boy had foiled all of his attempts to rid Berk of the Dragons, but if he was gone, then the dragons wouldn't be long behind him. He knew the dangers of what he planned to do, what would happen if he was discovered, but he let his hate dictate his actions. He didn't care about the three wives he'd lost to the countless battles with the beasts, good riddence to them. But his son, he'd never forgive them for taking him. Molden had been everything to him, and he was gone.

Stoik didn't know what it was like to loose a son to the constant effort of keeping their island safe. He didn't know how deep the pain and hatred could sink. It could destroy a man, even a viking man.

He looked down at Fungus, faithfully trodding beside him though the forest. He'd given the sheep to his son as a child, a gift of affection. He'd never had a lot of money, with the dragons always attacking, destroying everything in sight. But Molden had loved Fungus, and the sheep had been uncommonly faithful to Mildew since his son had died.

Mildew didn't let himself cry as he thought of his son, instead, he fed on the anger, let it drive him forward. He'd tried to protect berk from the dragons the easy way, now he only had one choice left. Even if it meant turning his back on his tribe, the home Molden had faught to protect, he would have his revenge on the dragons, and on those who'd opposed him in his quest to get rid of them.

After two hours walk, he found himself on the shore at the far end of the island. Hidden on the shore was the boat of berks greatest enemy, the only man Mildrew could trust to help him. He knew what Alvin wanted, and he knew that he could get it for him.

Mildew strode bravely toward the ship, holding his head high. He had nothing left to lose. "Oh alvin." he called, his toothy smile peaking out from his mustache.

The outcast jumped out from the ship, hitting the sands of the shore with a splattering of water around his feet. He eyed Mildrew suspiciously, his hand on the hilt of the axe at his side. "What do you want, Hooligan?"

Mildew grinned as if they were old friends. "I know what you're here for, and I can get him for you."

"The dragon conquerer." Alvin smiled dangerously.

Mildew leaned against his staff, listening to the gentle clank of the dragon teeth. "Yes. I can get him for you, without anyone noticing. You know what Stoik would do if you went right into the heart of berk and tried to take its heir. I can spare you that resistance."

Alvin smiled, his yellow teeth gleaming in the moonlight. "And why would you do that?"

Mildew pushed away the memory of his son. "I have my reasons."

"And what do you want in return?" Alvin didn't trust the viking, not yet. As an outcast, and a Treacherous, he knew how to slight someone. A man who betrayed his tribe faced death, and treason the likes of which Mildew was speaking would earn him no mercy.

"I want the Dragons gone from berk, and, protection from Stoik should he learn of our, arangment." He chuckled. "I'm not as young as I used to be."

Alvin considered Mildew's words carefully. If he could get the boy without alarming the village, it would make leaving with him much easier, though it did take some of the fun away. He knew that Stoik

wouldnt let him leave with his son without a fight, and on Berk, with his warriors and dragons, Stoik had every advantage.

"When can you get him to us?"

Mildew smiled crookedly. "I can have him tomorrow evening, all you'll need to do is take him from me."

"sounds too easy." Alvin grunted, scratching his beard.

"It didnt take me long to notice your ship, and with the dragons, it wont take Stoik long either." Mildew warned.

Alvin nodded, though he was irritated that they'd been found so quickly. "Tell me when, and where." he smirked. This was going to be easier then he'd anticipated, and he could live with that. Once he had the Dragon conquerer, he'd be able to control the dragons. Then berk would be his.

## 2. Chapter 2

\*\*A/N: \*\*Thanks to those of you who reviewed, it means a lot to me, this being my first Dragons fic. I do apologize for the spelling errors in the first chapter, I don't have spell check, and I wrote it in a hurry on three hours of sleep. Hopefully, the future chapters will be better. Updates may be a bit slow, as I'm currently more focused on my Drake and Josh fanfic right now. I don't know what made me think to try and write two fics at once, I think I'm loosing my mind.

~Also, as far as I know, Mildew doesn't actually have a son, I made Molden up, to try and give him more of a reason for hating the Dragons so much.

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Hiccup awoke early that morning to the sounds of Toothless pacing around the room, his claws tapping against the floor boards. The dragon was impatient to have his first flight of the day, and though he knew that Hiccup wanted to sleep, he couldn't help but make small sounds that he knew would eventually wake him.

He watched Hiccup curiously, the flutter of his eyelashes as he tried to fall back asleep. Now that he knew Hiccup was close to waking, toothless didn't try to keep quiet. He flopped on the floor, thudding loudly against it. When that didn't bring the young viking out of his forced slumber Toothless placed his paws on the bed, shaking it. He growled lightly, nudging Hiccup repeatedly unto finally the boys deep, green eyes opened and stared back at him.

"Morning buddy." hiccup yawned, rubbing the remaining sleep from his eyes.

Toothless offered his old, toothless smile and hopped away from the bed nodding toward the door.

He had to be the most impatient dragon on Berk. Hiccup thought as he pushed himself out of bed and followed the eager Dragon through the house and outside. The chill air of the early morning finished what

Toothless had started and soon he was wide awake and ready for whatever the day held.

After checking the saddle Hiccup climbed onto Toothless, securing his prosthetic foot in place. "Ready buddy?" He asked with a smile.

Toothless gave him a brief, eager nod and took off. There was nothing better than the first ride of the day. The air, though chilly, brought forth the scents of the new day with traces of Ocean. Hiccup watched the villagers go about their morning routines, setting out fresh food for the dragons and mingling before going their own ways. Life on Berk had become peaceful, and in that peace everyone was finding happiness. Hiccup felt pride in having been a part of that change, not only for the people of Berk, but the dragons as well.

They flew around the island, landing in the small cove where he and Toothless had first become friends. Though almost a year had passed since those days, Hiccup still remembered them as if it had only been a few weeks. Those first days had been tough, but once Toothless had begun to trust him, Hiccup couldn't describe how amazing he had felt. He looked at his dragon fondly, watching him as he stared at the placid waters. He didn't know what he would have done without Toothless, and all of the changes they had made together.

Hiccup both looked up as Astrid and Stormfly flew down, landing gracefully near the ponds shore. Hiccup smiled at her, breathing slowly as he watched the morning sunlight shine on her blond hair. Everything about her, from that beautiful hair, to her stunningly deep eyes captivated him. She was every bit as fierce as any Dragon, but she could be more gentle than anyone on Berk. He loved her, more than he could possibly express with words.

"You're out early." She said lightly as she sat next to Hiccup.

"Ah, Toothless was really restless." he replied, ignoring the Dragons brief grunt.

The teens spent their morning on the shore, talking and watching their dragons. It was turning out to be a warm, pleasant day on Berk. They wouldn't be at the Academy today, so the day was full of possibilities. They'd all ready decided to spend the day together, and they knew the perfect way to pass the hours. They climbed onto their dragons, exchanging cheerful nods before taking off into the nearly cloudless skies. Time slipped away as they soured over the island together, taking in everything. It wasn't soon after that they other teens joined them, finally awake and on their own dragons.

Together, the six of them moved in awkward unison, shouting over at one another with jokes and youthful challenges. The twins argued playfully, they dragon mimicking their taunting. As Snotlout tried to impress Astrid. Fishlegs as twiddling his thumbs, obviously trying to hide something that was bothering him. Noticing Fishlegs unease, Hiccup signaled the others that it was a good time to land.

They circled the center of town, landing one after the other and standing together. Hiccup looked at Fishlegs, trying to see into his constantly moving eyes. "What happened?" hiccup asked.

"Well," Fishlegs started, stepping closer to meatlug and petting her affectionately. "We were all flying this morning, looking for you and Astrid, and, well..." He stumbled over his words. "They did it." he squeaked, pointing at the twins.

"He did it." Ruffnut said, punching Tuffnut in the shoulder.

"Liar." Tuffnut retorted, punching her back.

"What happened?" hiccup asked again, starring at the three of them.

"\_She.\_" Tuffnut emphasized, "Might have hit the top of Mildew's house and left another hole in the roof."

"It was his Fault." Ruffnut said, pushing Tuffnut over.

Hiccup brought his hand to his face, rubbing his temples as he tried to ignore their squabbling. He was going to hear about this, right after his father. Mildew hated the Dragons enough without them damaging his property. "We're gonna have to fix it." Hiccup said, looking over at Astrid apologetically. There went their fun day together.

Almost on Cue, Stoick and mildew started toward the teens. The look on Stoick's face told hiccup that Mildew had been very rude with his irritation at what the twins had done. The coy grin on Mildew's face confirmed that they. Indeed, would be fixing the mess.

"I've told you, those dragons are a menace." Mildew was saying as they stopped before the teens.

"Who did it this time?" Stoick demanded impatiently, wanting to be rid of Mildew for the day.

"He did." Ruffnut said, pointing at her brother.

"She did." Tuffnut said, pointing back at her.

Stoick shook his head, looking toward Hiccup. 'It needs to be repaired.'

"All right," hiccup said, turning towards the others.

"Not those two." mildew growled, pointing at the fighting twins. "They'll make it worse." He needed only Hiccup, and he preferred to have the boy alone.

The twins exchanged content grins, shrugging their slouched shoulders. "Guess we're out." They muttered together.

"I've got to ugh, meatlug is sick." Fishlegs blurted out, nudging the heavy Dragon.

Snotlout looked around, trying to find his own excuse to avoid the unwanted work. "I need to go fight... something." He said, looking at the others for support.

Astrid rolled her eyes, stepping toward Hiccup. "I'll help." She

smiled.

Hiccup returned the smile, grateful that at least one of his friends was with him.

Mildew glared at Astrid, his mind trying to form a new plan. "Lets go." He called through gritted teeth.

They took a few steps before mildew stopped again, turning to see the dragons following their riders. "Not them." he snapped. It would be hard enough with the girl there, he couldn't allow the dragons as well. "I don't want those beasts near my home."

Hiccup and Astrid turned toward their dragons, offering apologetic smiles. It would be harder without the dragons. Hiccup approached toothless, scratching his powerful chin softly. "Sorry buddy." He whispered, hating the hurt look in his dragons eyes.

They followed Mildew in silence, thinking over the best ways to get the roof repaired quickly. Neither of them wanted to waste their entire day there. Mildew didn't say much of anything to them as he left them to repair the roof. He had thinking to do.

The first few hours passed quickly, and they were near done by early evening. They sat together on the roof, watching the clouds move lazily across the sky.

"It's beautiful." Astrid sighed, stretching her arms.

"Yeah," Hiccup said softly, resting his hand over hers.

Astrid turned her head, smiling as she leaned closer to him, her eyes closing.

"That roof isn't fixing itself." mildew shouted, startling them.

Astrid pulled her hand away from Hiccup's, feeling her smile disappear. "Were almost done." She offered, trying to be positive.

"we need more nails." hiccup said, looking over their tools.

They climbed down from the roof, looking around for Mildew. His house was so eerily empty that it left them uneasy. It was uncomfortable there, quiet.

"Mildew?" Hiccup called out.

Mildew walked out from another room, Fungus at his side. "Its not finished."

"We need more nails." Hiccup said blatantly.

"I don't have anymore." He retorted, petting the sheep.

"I'll go get some." Astrid offered. "I want to check on Stormfly anyway."

Hiccup smiled at her, though he didn't want to be alone with mildew.

"Check on toothless for me?"

"Sure." She said, setting off. If she hurried, they might be able to finish before late evening.

Hiccup went about organizing the last of boards and straw for the roof as Mildew watched Astrid disappear into the woods surrounding his house. As soon as she was out of sight, he crept up behind the unsuspecting boy.

"I'm sorry about your roof." Hiccup said over his shoulder. He was more sorry that he was fixing it, but he hoped that it would dispense some of his anger.

Mildew cackled, raising his staff. "I'm not." he said as he swung.

Hiccup didn't have time to turn around before his world exploded into darkness. Mildew watched the boy crumple to the floor, laughing as fungus moved around the boy. Mildew knew he didn't have much time before Astrid returned, so he went to work tying the boys wrists and gagging him. As soon as he was sure he was secured, Mildew stepped out of his house and lit the fire in his yard. Once the outcasts saw the smoke, they'd come and get the boy.

### 3. Chapter 3

Hiccup awoke to a fierce pounding in his head. He could hear his heart beat, cursing the constant annoyance as he tried to wish away the pain. Hesitantly, he opened his eyes, the slight blur of his vision clearing as he adjusted to his surroundings. He was still in Mildew's house.

Hiccup didn't remember falling asleep, all he could remember was Astrid leaving to get the final supplies they needed to finish the job... Astrid. She should be back by now. Hiccup went to push himself off of the floor when he realized that he couldn't move his arms. The first wave of panic crashed over him as he pulled at them, feeling the rope cut into his wrists. He was tied up! Hiccup's mind snapped into full awareness as he tried to find a reason for being tied up. That's when he noticed the cloth that had been tied into his mouth, quieting his heavy breathes.

Despite knowing that his words wouldn't be understood, Hiccup called out to anybody who might be in the house with him. Someone had knocked him out and left him here, and he felt that he deserved to know what was happening. When there was no answer he turned his attention back to trying to loosen the ropes. Whoever had tied them definitely knew what they were doing. After a few minutes he gave up, laying against the dirty floor as the fear stared to gnaw at him.

Where was Mildew? And more importantly, where was Astrid? He didn't know how long he'd been unconscious, but surely, she should have been back by now. If something had happened to her, he couldn't bare to think about it. Astrid was strong, she was a warrior in every sense of the word. Wherever she was, Hiccup assured himself that she was safe, admitted to himself that she would save him.

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After collecting the nails from Gobber Astrid made her way toward the other teens, who despite their reasons for not helping, had once again gathered together. Stormfly and toothless were both there, sitting contently with the other dragons. Upon seeing her, Toothless jumped to his feet, eyes eagerly seeking out his rider.

"He'll be back soon." Astrid smiled at the dragon, patting him on the head. She saw the understanding and impatience in his large, green eyes as he settled himself back upon the ground to wait. "Hey girl." Astrid pressed her cheek against her dragon's head, taking comfort in the warmth of the scales. "We're almost done." She whispered lovingly before turning to the others. "We could have been finished by now if we'd had help."

fishlegs turned away, embarrassed. "Sorry," he muttered softly. "Do you want help with the rest?" He didn't want to help, but he felt bad for ditching them earlier.

"It couldn't hurt." Astrid smiled, seeing how ashamed he was. "Anyone else?"

The twins looked at each other, then turned back toward her, shrugging.

"make him do it." Ruffnut said, shoving her brother.

"It was your fault." Tuffnut argued, shoving her back.

Astrid turned away from the twins as they continued shoving each other around and tossing the blame back and forth. She wanted to get back and finish the job before it got too late. Nodding at Fishlegs, she started toward the dirt path to Mildew's house, sighing heavily as Snotlout tagged along. He wasn't going to be any help, and she knew it. They'd only taken a few steps before Fishlegs stopped, looking back at Meatlug with hurt eyes, as if her were abandoning the sleeping dragon.

"Wait," he called out, rushing back toward her. "I'll be back soon." He said softly, coddling the Dragon. Meatlug didn't seem to mind that Fishlegs would be leaving, but she took advantage of the attention, her eyes growing wider as she received loving pets and brief, half-hidden kisses to her snout.

It took long minutes to pry Fishlegs away from the dragon as Astrid tried to hurry him, making him that much more attentive to the dragon. Finally, she gave up and went to stand next to Snotlout, shrugging off his tries at her attention. Hiccup was waiting, and she knew that the longer they procrastinated, the more annoyed Mildew would be.

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"Where are those damned outcasts?" Mildew muttered as he walked back into the house, ignoring the struggling teen on his floor.

Hiccup shot a glare at mildew, watching the man completely ignore him was infuriating. \_So it had been Mildew....\_ Hiccup thought as he tried to reason out what was happening. He wanted nothing more than

to demand answers from the old viking as he started pulling at the ropes again, hissing in pain as they continued to agitate his skin.

"Be still." Mildew commanded, finally acknowledging Hiccup. He wanted the boy out of the house before the girl returned. If he were caught, he'd face certain, slow death. "They'll be here for you soon." Mildew promised darkly as he knelt beside Hiccup, pulling out a jagged dagger.

Hiccup's eyes widened in fear as he stared at the blade moving slowly closer. Muffled shouts slipped through his gag as Mildew grabbed his vest and began cutting it off of him, tearing claw like gashes into it. He bit down on the cloth as Mildew sliced into his arm, smearing the blood on the vest.

"Cant have them looking for you here." he said more to himself as he stepped away from Hiccup to watch for Alvin and his men.

Moments later there was heavy knocking at the door. Hiccup watched Mildew as he went to answer it, hoping that it was Astrid. Mildew had mentioned the outcasts, and if they got him, there was no telling what they'd do. Alvin was Berks greatest enemy now that the dragons had stopped attacking, and he would do anything to have berk for his own. Hiccup didn't want to be caught in the middle, used as leverage against his father.

His hope slipped away as mildew chuckled, stepping to the side to allow his visitor in. "Took you long enough."

Alvin walked into the house, his heavy footfalls shaking the floor. He looked down at Hiccup, his yellowed teeth exposed as he grinned widely. "All wrapped up and ready." He said as he stepped toward the teen, grabbing his hands and lifting him as if he weighed nothing. "I cant believe that this conquered the dragons." he laughed, throwing Hiccup over his shoulder.

Hiccup kicked his feet furiously, trying to make Alvin put him down. He didn't want to be taken by the Outcast, and he was determined to do what he could to slow him down. So he kicked, his foot hitting the hard chest of the outcast repeatedly as he tried to yell insults at him. At times like these, he truly hated being so much smaller then the other vikings, feeling weak.

Alvin smacked the side of Hiccup's head, rattling the small boy. "Stop that, pest." he grunted.

"Take this," mildew said, handing Alvin the torn, bloody vest. "Leave it somewhere so they think a dragon got him. It should help keep them off your trail."

Alvin snatched the vest from Mildew, tucking it into his belt. "They'll start looking for him here." Alvin said as he walked toward the door, his hold on Hiccup never loosening.

"That's why you're gonna knock me out." mildew grinned at Hiccup, taunting the helpless teen. "They cant accuse me if I don't know what happened."

Hiccup glared at Mildew, grunting names as the traitor. He'd make

sure his father knew, that all of Berk knew who'd betrayed them.

"Keep the gag on him," Mildew warned. "The boys beast has excellent hearing, if he hears the boy screaming he'll give your men trouble." He remembered Hiccup's near graduation from the dragon fighting academy. When the Monstrous Nightmare had gone after the boy, his dragon had been there in record time to save him.

Alvin didn't like being told what to do. He closed his free fist, hitting Mildew especially hard as he prepared to leave. He laughed at the older man as he fell to the floor, his sheep nudging him carefully. It wasn't natural, the sheep's affection toward the old man.

Alvin adjusted Hiccup before leaving the house and heading into the forest. He wanted to get to the ship as quickly as possible to avoid any possible run ins with the islands vikings. He knew that he could kill any of them easily, but didn't want to risk loosing his captive. Once he was under the cover of the trees he began to run, holding Hiccup so tightly he thought he might break him. With his free hand he forced branches out of his way, barreling through the thickets.

The farther they got from Mildew's house, the louder hiccup tried to scream. He didn't care who heard him, as long as someone, or something, heard. He knew that Toothless' hearing was amazing, but with his voice subdued, and them growing farther apart, he didn't know if the Dragon would be able to hear him. He kicked until his legs grew tired, urging them to keep moving. He refused to go easily, to make this kidnapping pleasant.

Halfway to the shore Alvin tossed the vest into a thicket, leaving it behind. He didn't do it because Mildew had told him to, but because he knew that finding it would tear Stoick apart. He only wished that he'd be there to see the look on the viking chief's face when he saw it. When the fear crept into his eyes. He'd miss that delicious moment of suffering, but when they took Berk, when he killed the boy right in front of his father, that was the moment he was truly looking forward to.

Alvin's breaths were labored when he finally reached the ship. In between breaths he laughed at the ever struggling boy. All that fight had been wasted. "to the shop." he grunted, dropping Hiccup onto his feet.

The sudden feeling of ground underneath him sent jarring waves of pain through Hiccup's legs. He whimpered as Alvin forced him forward on shaking legs, up the ramp and into the ship. Hiccup tried not to look into the faces of the laughing outcasts as he was lead across the deck and down to the cages. Alvin shoved him into one, staring down at him as he did his best to sit up and look mean. He didn't want his fear to show, to give Alvin the satisfaction of knowing that he was fully afraid now.

"No one's going to save you." Alvin spat as he turned away from Hiccup and headed back to the deck, calling out to the men that it was time to go.

Once he was alone, Hiccup pressed his back against the bars of the

cage, rubbing the ropes against them. He felt the ship begin to move, the waves crashing gently against it in harmony with his slow, shallow breathes. The outcasts cheering drifted down into the depths of the ship, assuring Hiccup that, as Alvin had said, no one was going to save him. Despite himself, Hiccup felt the unwanted tears falling across his cheeks.

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Toothless' ears twitched as a small sound, carried by the wind brushed across his hearing. It was a familiar sound and it unnerved him that he couldn't place it. His eyes opened as he turned his head to try and hear it better, straining against the closer noises. His head snapped to the side and his claws dug into the earth as he realized what he was hearing. It was hiccup's voice, very far away, but undoubtedly him.

Toothless jumped to his feet, ignoring the odd looks from the other dragons and the vikings as he ran toward it. The sound was full of fear, and it filled the dragon with worry and anger. He caught the scent of the teens who's left and followed it, cursing his damaged tail as he ran. If only he could fly! But he needed Hiccup for that, or his father, but Toothless didn't want to waste time looking for the large viking.

He became more determined when he could no longer hear the voice of his rider, running faster on his short legs. In the absence of the sound his senses had found something else, something that caused t=an angry growl to radiate from his closed mouth. The scent of blood.

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Astrid heard the almost nonexistent sounds of yelling and dropped the nails. \_Hiccup! \_She didn't look back at the others as she began to run toward mildew's house, her heart racing as she tried to tell herself that the sounds were nothing. No matter how fast she ran, the sounds were growing weaker, until she couldn't hear them at all.

She hesitated for only a moment as she saw the open door and moved toward it. Her blue eyes immediately finding the unconscious Mildew laying on the floor. She stepped past the old man, desperately searching for Hiccup. "Hiccup?" She called out, her heart stopping as she saw the speckles of blood on the floor. "Hiccup!"

She stepped out of the house, watching as Fishlegs and Snotlout arrived behind her. "Whats wrong." Fishlegs asked, seeing the distress on her face.

"Mildew's unconscious, and Hiccup's gone." She looked back at the house, not caring about the older viking as her worry grew. She turned toward Snotlout, her mind racing with possibilities. "Go get Stoick."

Snotlout wheezed, not fond of the running she was asking of him. "I'm tired." He complained.

Annoyed, she turned toward fishlegs, who was all ready turning to go back to the village. "Thank you." She said as she stepped toward the forests. She couldn't hear Hiccup anymore, and didn't know which

direction to start running in. She stepped forward, ready to search blindly when her balance shifted. Looking down, she saw the heavy footprints in the earth. Someone very heavy had been there. Without a word, Astrid began falling the footprints, hoping that whoever had made them wasn't too far ahead of her.

She rolled her eyes as Snotlout began following her. He hadn't had the energy to go back to the village, but he was fine with following her strong pace. She didn't waste breath to call him out on it as she followed the footprints, cursing at the grass and leaves that hid them as she moved deeper into the trees. She ran as fast as her feet would carry her, stopping only when she heard the angry growling catching up to her. She stopped, turning back to see where the sound was coming from. Toothless.

The dragon's eyes were narrow slits as he ran past her, his nose low to the ground as he followed the scent. Astrid followed the Dragon, silently thanking him. She'd all but lost the foot trail, and Toothless was her only hope of finding Hiccup.

The distressed howl that escaped the dragon's throat as he found the vest pierced her heart. She pushed her tired legs forward, determined to see what he had found. Let him be okay. She begged the gods as she stepped closer to Toothless, her eyes falling on the discarded vest.

#### 4. Chapter 4

At first, all Astrid could do was stare at the shredded, bloody vest. Her heart beat against her ears as her mind tried to deny what her eyes were seeing. There was no body, no trail of blood leading away from the vest she knew belonged to Hiccup. He had to be okay... finding herself, she stepped closer to it, cautiously touching the soft fur. The blood was still relatively warm, still fresh. "Hiccup..." His name was a breathless whisper on her trembling lips.

Astrid tried to fight the fear growing within herself. She was a viking warrior, she was stronger than the darkness overtaking her thoughts. She reached inside of herself, trying to find that strength, but it was nowhere to be found. All she could do was look at the vest, the low, sorrowful moaning from Toothless resonating in her ears. With shaking hands she pulled the vest from the bushes, holding it close against her chest as a shuddering breath left her weak. Her legs faltered, and before she knew what was happening she was on her knees, her head hanging against her chest.

She felt the tears fall as Toothless pressed his head against her shoulder, his powerful eyes searching hers for answers. She didn't have words for the Dragon, so she wrapped her arms around his thick neck, trying to hide the tears she couldn't stop from falling.

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Stoick and Fishlegs made their way back to Mildew's house as quickly as their legs could carry them. The moment Fishlegs had come stumbling into the village, Stoick had become worried. He hadn't been able to make out much of what the young teen had been trying to tell

him, but the words \_Hiccup\_ and \_Missing\_ had been enough. Hiccup was supposed to be at Mildew's house, fixing the roof. There shouldn't have been any trouble at all. But if anyone could find trouble with such a mundane task, it was Hiccup.

When they finally arrived at the old viking's home Stoick left Fishlegs to catch his breath and went into the house. Mildew was still laying unconscious on the floor, and there was no sign of Hiccup anywhere. Despite his worry, Stoick kept a strong face and exited the house, eyes searching for any clue as to what had happened. There were heavy footprints on the ground leading into the forest, smaller, fresher prints beside them.

He followed the prints with his eyes, looking up to see Astrid slowly emerging from the trees. In all her years, Stoick had never seen her look so utterly defeated. He searched her face for answers, his eyes falling unto the vest in her hands. Hiccup's vest.

Stoick felt his breath catch in his throat as he looked at the bloody, shredded vest. He took a strong step forward, his mouth moving beneath his beard, though no words came out.

Astrid looked up at the chief. She had wiped away her tears, but her blue eyes were still moist as she handed the vest over, shaking her head. "Its all I could find..."

Stoick took the vest into his large, strong hands, feeling the now cool and sticky blood against his fingers. His fear was swallowed by fury ad he held it tightly. His grief was drowned out by determination to have answers. "Get me a bucket of water." He said coldly as he walked back into mildew's house, staring down at the unconscious viking.

Astrid came back with the bucket of cold water, handing it to Stoick who threw it upon Mildew, startling him forth from his sleep. Before the old viking could say anything, Stoick stepped forward, hovering over him. "Where is Hiccup?" he demanded, calm yet angry.

Mildew looked around the room, his confusion convincing. "Hes right there... what happened?" he asked, noticing himself on the ground and covered in cold water.

Stoick glared at the viking distastefully. Mildew was old, but he had been trained in the ways of a warrior in his youth, that anyone had come into his home so easily was beyond odd. He knew that Mildew hated the dragons, and was none to fond of Hiccup for bringing peace to the island. "Where is my son?" Stoick said again, his voice hard.

Mildew pushed himself to his feet, his eyes hard as he starred at the chief. "I don't know." he spat. Stepping back. "He was in here when we heard a noise outside. A dragon noise," Mildew said, gazing out his open door as if remembering. "He went out to see what was happening, and then next thing I know I'm on the floor, soaking wet."

Stoick didn't believe anything that mildew was saying, but without any sort of proof, he was lost at what to do. The hand holding Hiccup's vest was shaking as he held it out before mildew. "How did this happen?"

Mildew gasped, looking over the vest in mock horror. "Oh my," He said "Looks like something attacked him. He passed his hand over the shredded cloth. "like a dragon."

"There haven't been attacks by the Dragons in months!" Stoick's voice boomed loudly.

Mildew stepped back again, clutching his staff for support. "I can't tell you what I don't know." Mildew replied, shaking his head. "I do hope you find him though, looks like he might be hurt."

Frustrated, Stoick turned away from Mildew and pushed through the door to his house, his feet hitting the wooden floor loudly. He'd be back for Mildew, he'd get his answers, but right now, he needed to find his son.

Astrid was waiting outside the door, her eyes intent. "What did he say?" She'd heard everything, but she wanted Stoick's take on what had happened. She didn't trust Mildew at all.

Stoick shook his head. "Nothing of use." He looked back at the foot tracks, beginning to follow them. "How far in did you find this?" He asked, still holding Hiccup's vest.

Astrid stepped forward, following her own footprints to the tree line. "This way."

Retracing her steps, they made their way back to the bush where Hiccup's vest had been discarded, Toothless on their heels every step of the way. Once they arrived at the bosh, Stoick knelt to the ground, moving the leaves and other debris around until he found more tracks. Mildew had claimed there was a dragon, but Stoick doubted that even more with the tracks. These were human, a very heavy human. He turned toward Toothless, who was watching him with curious, desperate eyes.

"Can you follow them?" It would take them even longer if they were moving the forest floor to find the hidden tracks.

Toothless put his snout to the ground, flinching at the bad scent. It was weak, but if the winds stayed subdued, then he was sure that he could follow them. He nodded at Stoick before setting off after the tracks, moving as fast as the scent would allow. Every few moments Toothless would paw at the ground, moving the leaves to make sure that he was still on the trail until they reached the shore.

The tracks were visible again in the moist earth of the shore, and there were many different sets of footprints. Stoick felt his heart pull at his chest when he saw what were undoubtedly Hiccup's tracks. One regular foot, one rectangular. Kneeling on the ground, his large fingers traced his son's tracks toward the waterline, where it was obvious a ship had been. Someone had been here recently, and they had taken Hiccup with them. Clenching his mighty fist, Stoick hit the ground, and angry yell escaping his throat.

"Who did this?" Astrid asked softly, looking down at the various sized tracks along the beach. She couldn't bring herself to look at Hiccup's tracks, to acknowledge that he'd been here.

Stoick lifted his head, catching the foul smell that Toothless had followed to the beach. Most viking tribes weren't the cleanest, but he knew this scent of rot and body odor. "Alvin..." He replied dangerously.

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It felt as those hours had passed by the time Hiccup had finally broken the ropes around his wrists on the bars of the cage. His shoulders were stiff from having been pulled back so long, so carefully, he moved his arms forward and tore the moist gag from his dry mouth. He coughed a few times, trying to remain quiet. There were bruises on his wrists from pulling at the ropes. Hiccup went to work on trying to restore the circulation as he tried to understand why the outcasts had taken him.

Alvin hadn't told him why when he'd been brought to the ship, but Hiccup knew enough to think it had something to do with Alvin calling him the dragon conqueror. Alvin wanted Berk for his own, and he'd do anything to have it. Hiccup pulled his knees to his chest and rested his head on them, his eyes shut against his surroundings. He didn't want to be here, part of a plan to destroy his home and family. He told himself countless times that whatever Alvin wanted of him, he wouldn't do. He wouldn't betray Berk, no matter the cost.

It was late into the night when the ship pulled into a hidden cave of the outcasts island. Hiccup watched the outside world disappear through the small windows of the ship, his gut sinking as they disappeared from view. He could hear the outcasts moving around on the deck of the ship, his eyes following the heavier steps of Alvin as he moved across the ship, toward the stairs to the room where Hiccup was caged. He tried to hide his fear as Alvin came down the steps, grinning at him. He didn't want to be afraid, to look the part of the smaller viking that he was.

"Got yerslf loose did ya?" Alvin laughed, approaching the cage.

"What do you want?" hiccup demanded.

Alvin laughed, the stench of his breath drifting over toward Hiccup. "I want whats mine." He said simply. "I want Berk, and yer gonna help me get it." He unlocked the cage, reaching in and grabbing Hiccup roughly by the arm.

"I wont." Hiccup gasped as he was jerked out of the cage. "I'd rather die."

Alvin chuckled loudly, pulling the smaller viking toward the stairs. "Stoick wouldn't let that happen." he taunted. "You're gonna teach us to ride Dragons, and then yer daddy will hand over Berk to save you."

Hiccup tried to stand his ground, but Alvin was much stronger then he was. "My dad will fight." He said confidently. "He's stronger then you."

Alvin stopped walking, turning sharply and back handing the young viking. "I preferred you gagged." He muttered under his breath before starting to walk again.

Hiccup felt the sting in his cheek where Alvin had hit him, but he refused to cry. He was silent as Alvin pulled him through the cool underwater cave into the warmer upper layers of the Outcasts hideout. He looked around as he was lead through the tunnels, trying to take in as much as he could. He saw a great many outcasts, though, not as many as the warriors of Berk. A battle between the two groups would be bloody, but Berk had the advantage. Alvin knew that, that's why he'd kidnapped him.

Hiccup counted the men, the barrels of weapons as he was lead further into the mountain lair. He ran scenarios through his mind to keep from thinking about Alvin's plan. He needed to stay calm, to be strong. Any of the other viking teens would be fighting their way out of here, even Fishlegs. He envied their size and strengths now more then ever.

Alvin stopped in front of a large, carved out room in the side of the wall with bars placed at its opening. "Welcome to yer new home." he laughed as he dragged hiccup inside, throwing him against the rough wall. While Hiccup was still dazed from hitting the wall, Alvin took hold of his wrists and cuffed them into the shackles hanging from the walls, making sure they were locked before stepping back. They'd made those cuffs especially for Hiccup, as all of their others were set for larger, stronger vikings.

Hiccup pulled at the chains attaching him to the wall, testing their strength. "You aren't going to win." He said. "Just take me home."

Alvin took a moment to pretend that he was thinking over the teens words before grinning. "I think I stand a good chance, with you here." He leaned in front of Hiccup, exposing his yellowed teeth. "First we learn to ride Dragons, then we attack. Stoick wont be as fierce if he thinks your in danger." Alvin jabbed his finger at hiccup, mocking the boys size. "Yer an embarrassment of a viking."

Hiccup turned away from Alvin. He'd been hearing things like that most of his life. "I'm stronger then I look." He whispered.

"Sure you are." Alvin laughed, pulling a cloth from his belt. "You talk too much." He muttered as he tied the cloth into the struggling vikings mouth. It tasted almost as bad as Alvin smelt. "See you in the morning." Alvin called as he put out the torches, leaving Hiccup in near complete darkness.

Hiccup fell into the darkness as he was left alone. It was everything he could do not to vomit at the taste of the cloth that had been tied into his mouth to keep him quiet. He continued to pull at his restraints, silently hoping that he'd have enough strength to pull them loose. They were secure. He felt his head fall against his chest as he tried to stay calm and form a plan. He wouldn't help Alvin, he just wouldn't! He told himself over and over again.

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Stoick starred off into the sea, trying to think of what he could do. Judging by the tracks on the shore, there were at least twenty outcasts on the ship. He had no doubt that he could take them all,

but with Hiccup as a hostage...

There weren't enough seasoned vikings on Berk who knew how to ride a dragon to go straight after them, and if they waited to assemble a ship, Alvin and the others would be too far ahead. He was stuck at an impasse of what to do, and the indecision was killing him. He'd never faltered before, never failed to let his sword take control of his actions. But he couldn't risk getting Hiccup killed. He felt weak, betrayed by his feelings. Alvin needed Hiccup, he wouldn't kill him. Stoick took empty comfort in that thought as he headed back toward the village. If Alvin wanted war, he was going to get it, and he'd regret the decision to kidnap his son.

## 5. Chapter 5

Hiccup spent the long hours of the night drifting in and out of sleep. It was hard to sleep for long standing, and every time he did manage to sleep the shackles pulling on his arms quickly forced him back into the conscious world. The hunger gnawing at his empty stomach didn't help. He'd completely lost track of the time in the darkness of his prison, but the majority of the noise from outside had disappeared, leading him to believe that the outcasts had fallen asleep.

Hiccup pulled at the shackles again, knowing that it would do him no good. He just couldn't stand there, doing nothing. He didn't want to think about the things Alvin had said to him hours earlier. Alvin wanted to use him to tame dragons and conquer Berk. Hiccup couldn't imagine helping the dreadful outcast in any way. He'd be betraying his friends, his tribe... his father. He wouldn't do it, he repeated to himself. No matter what happened.

After countless hours of drifting in and out of sleep, the noises picked up again. It must be morning. Hiccup thought to himself as he waited to see if Alvin would be coming back for him.

Alvin came down the hall toward the prison carrying a single torch, its flickering light making his gruff face all the more terrifying. Each heavy footfall shifted the light on his face as he grinned and unlocked the cell door. "Morning Hiccup." He said mockingly.

Hiccup didn't bother trying to respond. He'd hoped that Alvin would bring food, but the only thing in his hands was the torch.

Alvin placed the torch in a rough metal holder in the wall before approaching Hiccup, pulling the gag from his mouth. "Are you ready to help?" He laughed.

"What do you need help with, seems like you've got everything under control here." Hiccup replied passively.

"The dragons," Alvin said harshly. "We need you to conquer them and make them listen to us."

Hiccup shrugged his shoulders, trying not to let the rot of Alvin's breath make him cough. "Couldn't you just charm them into submission." he said, glaring at the large viking.

Alvin hit Hiccup across the face, grunting his frustration with the

teen. "You'll regret not helping us." He snapped as he replaced the gag and walked over toward the torch. "How long can you hold out, without food and sleep?"

Hiccup glared at the viking, trying to look tough. His face stung with the after effects of the hit, and he was exhausted and hungry.

Alvin turned away from him, leaving the cell and taking the torch with him. Once again, Hiccup was alone in the dark, with only his thoughts to keep him company. How long could he go without food? Without real sleep?

Hiccup shook his head, letting it hang against his chest as his stomach grumbled in his ears. Surly, Alvin wouldn't starve him, would he? Alvin didn't seem like a compassionate man, but if Hiccup were dead, what use would he be? He just needed to hold out until Alvin gave in, then he'd have what he needed to survive, and still be able to refrain from helping the vile outcasts.

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Stoick stood at the head of the table in the great hall, the torch lights flickering across his grim face. With the heavy hall doors shut, the fresh rays of light from the morning sun could not enter. But in this time of darkness, Stoick didn't welcome that sun.

The choice to remain on the island last night had been one of the hardest he'd made. He knew that there'd be no sure way to rescue Hiccup, that the risk of him being killed had been too high. But to just stay on the island, rallying the other warriors made him feel so weak. Alvin was ruthless, cruel beyond measure. There was no way of knowing exactly why he had taken Hiccup, what he would do to him. It was tearing away at Stoick's reserve.

Stoick looked to the waiting warrior's, all of their faces hard, determined. He was their chief, if he hesitated, then he was weak. They were waiting for him to make his choice, to prove that even now, he could still lead them.

"As you've all heard, Hiccup was taken by the Outcasts yesterday." Just saying it ignited his growing rage. "They came onto our shores and took one of our own, the heir to our thrown!" Stoick thrust his fists upon the table, shaking it. "Alvin has called for war, and we will answer that call." He growled, looking into the nodding heads of his people.

Spitlout stepped forward, raising his fist. "This isn't the first time those Outcasts have invaded our shores, but it will be the last!" he shouted.

Stoick placed a hand on his brother's shoulder, smiling gratefully. They hadn't always gotten along, especially with his son the next in line to succeed Stoick, but Spitlout's support meant more to him than he dared say.

"Gobber," Stoick yelled over the rising commotion. "We're going to need more weapons, fast."

Gobber grinned, twisting his hooked hand. "I'll need a few more

assistants." he admitted. Hiccup had been his apprentice, but there were others in the village who knew the trade.

Stoick nodded. "Anyone who can help, go with Gobber. When we find the Outcasts, we aren't just fighting for Hiccup, but for Berk's future. Their actions will not be tolerated, nor forgiven. There will be casualties, but death in Battle is the highest honor, and the Gods will welcome our fallen into Valhalla, singing praise for their deeds."

Stoick paused, listening to the rallying cries of the warriors in the hall. It had been too long since these warriors had seen battle, and they were ready for it. Vikings lived and died by the sword, and with the peace of the dragons, that fight had gone. Stoick looked proudly at his people, all of them cheering, fists raised. Alvin would regret everything, he was sure of it.

"We set sail for the Outcast's island in three days," Stoick yelled over the commotion. "For Berk!"

"For Berk!" The Vikings shouted back.

The doors were opened as the Vikings shuffled out to prepare, letting the great burst of light sweep over the room, killing the darkness. Stoick closed his eyes, the salted air rushing over him. If their weapons hadn't been destroyed, he would have set sail today, he'd be on his ship at this very moment. But he couldn't send his people weaponless into battle. Three days would have to be enough, to wait any longer would drive him into insanity.

Once the hall had emptied he walked over to the portrait of himself and Hiccup that Bucket had painted., lightly tracing his fingers over the image of his son. "I haven't always been the best father," he confessed softly, "But I won't leave you to suffer at Alvin's mercy. I will come for you, and Alvin will pay for anything, everything that he's done." Stoick promised.

He felt his eyes itch with tears and pushed them back. Vikings didn't cry. He let out a deep, shuddering breath and pulled his hand away from the portrait. Hiccup wasn't the strongest of Vikings, but he was clever. Stoick only hoped that Hiccup could last the three days they would need to prepare. He believed in Hiccup.

After a few silent moments Stoick composed himself and headed out of the hall, where he was quickly intercepted by Astrid.

"Mildew had something to do with it." She said harshly. "The moment Hiccup was there alone, that's when the outcasts attacked. It couldn't have been a coincidence."

Stoick looked down at her, his eyes hard. He'd suspected the same thing, but without proof, there wasn't much he could do. "To accuse a viking of high treason, we need proof." He said gravely.

Astrid stepped in front of him, stopping him in his tracks. "You must suspect him!" She exclaimed, her small hands balled into fists.

Stoick sighed heavily, placing a large hand on her shoulder. "The proof is there, if you can find it, Mildew will be brought before the

elders and dealt with." With that said, he stepped around her and continued toward the graves. He needed time to think.

Astrid watched as Stoick headed on, taking his words in. He did suspect Mildew! She didn't know how she'd prove him guilty, but she was determined to try. He hated Hiccup, and that to her was enough. She walked toward the waiting Stormfly, patting her gently before climbing onto her back. She needed time to think, to plan.

Toothless watched as Stoick left the Hall, and slowly, climbed to his feet and set out to follow him. He knew that the big man was worried about Hiccup, just as he was. He'd grown so used to being able to fly when Hiccup was there that he'd nearly forgotten that, without the boy, he couldn't fly at all. If it hadn't been for his damaged tail, he'd have set out after Hiccup the instant he'd found the vest.

If it hadn't been for Hiccup, his tail would be whole. Toothless thought gloomily. The only thing he could do to help the boy who'd given him reason to live, he couldn't do without him. Toothless growled in frustration, wishing he hadn't destroyed the improved tail that Hiccup had crafted.

A low, frustrated growl escaped his throat as he followed the chief out of the village and through a small patch of forest. He'd never gone this way with Hiccup, and he was anxious to know where Stoick was so determined to go.

Stoick was aware that Toothless was following him, but he was too preoccupied to acknowledge the dragon. He continued forward, the growls and heavy steps of the dragon fading out as his mind continued to race.

On the far side of the island he had set a stone in memory of his wife, Hiccup's mother. He thought the worst pain he'd ever feel was loosing her, her lose had brought the only tears he could ever remember shedding. The stone sat near the edge of a cliff where they had met when they were young. They would practice their sword fighting there, and had even conceived their only son in that very spot.

Stoick knelt beside the stone, touching it lightly. "In these times, we need you more then ever, Valhallarama. You were one of the best Warrior's berk has ever seen."

He felt Toothless nudge his arm, and looked back at the dragon somberly. "You really miss him, don't you?" Stoick knew that the dragon and Hiccup were close, but he'd found it hard to believe that such a powerful beast could feel such compassion.

Toothless nodded his heavy head, looking out toward the horizon.

Stoick pulled Hiccup's vest from his belt, laying it next to Valhallarama's stone. "Watch over him." He softly begged. He set a heavy hand on Toothless' head. "One way or another, we're going to bring him home."

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Hiccup wasn't sure how much time had passed when Alvin again came down

the tunnel to his cell. He watched the growing light of the torch, dreading it while hoping that he'd be brought something to eat. The hunger was causing pain to pulse through his empty stomach, and the thirst was burning his lungs.

Alvin unlocked the cell, carefully balancing the warm bowl on his arm. Hiccup's eyes widened at the sight of food. Alvin noticed the look on the teen's face and chuckled lightly as he entered the cell. He set the bowl down at Hiccup's feet and pulled the gag from his mouth.

"Are you hungry?" He taunted.

Hiccup could feel his mouth watering as the smell of the gruel rose into his nostrils. "Wouldn't you be?" He asked, trying not to let his hunger show.

Alvin was in no mood for games. He nudged the bowl with his foot, spilling some over the lip and onto the dirty ground. "If you want to eat, Hiccup, you'll help us."

Hiccup shook his head. "I won't betray my tribe."

Alvin kicked the bowl again, spilling even more of it. "How do we conquer the dragons?" He demanded.

Hiccup closed his eyes, trying not to think about the food going to waste right in front of him. "You could try some of you're outcast charm. If that doesn't work, you're breath ought to do the trick."

Alvin hit Hiccup across the face, the bruise from that morning pulsing as it was struck. "You will do what I tell you." He growled. "Now, tell me how to conquer the dragons!"

Hiccup shook his head, spitting the blood from his split lip at Alvin's feet.

Alvin hit Hiccup again, watching the small boy hit the rough wall. He pulled the keys from his belt and unlocked the shackles, quickly grabbing Hiccup's wrist and pulling it high above him. Hiccup was surprisingly light, and it took little effort for Alvin to hold him hovering over the floor by his arm.

Hiccup gritted his teeth against the pain, shaking his head at Alvin. "I won't do it!" He shouted.

Alvin threw Hiccup to the ground, whistling loudly.

Another Viking came down the hall, dragging a thick chain behind him. At the end of the chain, pulling and growling behind the crudely fashioned muzzle, was a terrible terror. The man led the dragon into the cell, looking at Alvin for his next order.

Alvin picked the bowl up from the floor, stepping outside the cell and nodding to the Viking who dropped the chain and exited the cell.

Hiccup knew that they were watching to see what he would do, so he pressed himself against the wall, trying to ignore the angry,

frightened Dragon. There were numerous scars on its small body where it had been beaten, and it looked to be half starved.

The little terror went straight toward the spilled food, trying desperately to eat it through the muzzle. Watching it struggle for the ruined food pulled at Hiccup's heart, and despite himself, he gave in. Carefully, he crawled toward the dragon, watching it arch its back and growl.

"I wont hurt you." hiccup whispered the promise, moving closer. "I just want to get that thing off of you."

He reached his hand out, waiting for the dragon to accept it. It hurt to hold out the arm that Alvin had held him by, but he willed the pain away from his face, trying to look peaceful to the frightened dragon. If it didn't trust him, he wouldn't blame it. By the look of those scars, the outcasts had been very cruel.

The terror looked to the spilled food, her paw touching it greedily. She couldn't remember the last time she'd had eaten, and her body was sore from the hunger. She turned her large, green eyes toward Hiccup, studying his face curiously. He hadn't hit her yet, nor was he yelling. She took a careful step forward, waiting for the blow that never came. She looked back at the spilt gruel, then took another step forward, nudging Hiccup's hand with her head.

Hiccup smiled, slowly moving his hands around her head to undo the clasp holding the muzzle in place. Once it was off, the dragon went straight to the gruel, eating it furiously. There wasn't much, but she was overjoyed just to eat. Once she licked the floor clean, she carefully approached Hiccup, staring at him.

Hiccup pushed himself against the wall, trying not to think about the outcasts watching him. He felt his stomach groan as he watched the terror eat the gruel, his own hunger gnawing at him. If Alvin hadn't been watching, he might have done the same as the little dragon. But he wouldn't let Alvin see him so weak. He held his hand out to the dragon, waiting as she carefully moved closed and curled up at this side.

"How?" Alvin demanded, his heavy voice summoning angry growls from the little dragon.

"Hiccup shook his head, scratching her neck. "You can't do it." he said honestly.

"You will teach me." Alvin grinned, taking the torch, and the remaining gruel with him as he descended back down the tunnel.

Hiccup was glade for the isolating darkness as Alvin and the other Outcast left. His entire body hurt, and as he sat in the dark pertaining the small dragon, he felt the tears burn in his eyes. He didn't know how long he'd be able to hold out in this place.

Surly, his dad was looking for him? Soon Stoick would be tearing the Outcast lair apart to rescue him. Hiccup pulled his knees toward his chest, resting his heavy head against them. "Dad..." he whispered, afraid that Alvin might be listening. "Please, get here soon..."

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\*\*A/N: \*\*I'm sorry this update has taken so long. I've been rather depressed, and I just haven't wanted to be near the computer, or trying to work on anything. I'm sorry.

\_In case of confusion: \_

~In the books, Snotlout is Hiccup's cousin, though, his father's name is BaggyBum. In the movie, at least in the credits, they call him Spitlout, which I think sounds a bit better.

~ Also, in the books Hiccup's mother's name is Valhallarama.

## 6. Chapter 6

Stoick woke early the next morning, though, he hadn't really slept at all. What little rest he had gotten was plagued by tormenting visions of the things he knew that Alvin was capable of. Hiccup was clever and determined, but he was also very small. Stoick pushed away the lingering images and walked through his home, taking in the almost complete silence. He could hear Toothless in Hiccup's room, his claws tapping against the floor as he paced, the soft, discontent growls erupting from his throat.

He shook his head, his beard brushing over his chest as he walked toward Hiccup's room. The house seemed too big without Hiccup. Stoick entered the chilly room, looking down at Toothless, who was staring back at him. "You didn't sleep either?" He asked softly.

Toothless turned his eyes toward the window, a low growl vibrating against his throat.

Stoick followed the dragon's gaze, out onto the still ocean. Outcast island was about a day's journey by boat, by dragon it could be half that. Every bit of him wanted to go now, to rush in and bring Hiccup home, but Stoick wasn't a fool. Even with a dragon, he couldn't take on all of the outcasts. He wasn't worried about his life, but Hiccup's... He couldn't risk Hiccup getting hurt.

He offered a comforting pat to Toothless' head before leaving the room, his eyes downcast as he tried to push the fear away. A viking feared nothing, he was tough, he was strong. Right now, Stoick didn't feel like much of a viking, now, he felt like a father. Those feelings shook everything he'd believed about himself and left him confused. He usually faced the things that made him uneasy and threatened his people with a sword, but he couldn't cut through the emotions tearing through him.

Stoick barely had the door open when toothless came down the stairs and stopped at his heels. He turned toward the dragon, and gestured for him to follow. Without Hiccup around, Toothless had taken to either following him around, or going off on his own for long periods of time. The dragon seemed to be in just as much pain as he was, appeared to feel just as powerless.

"Stay." Stoick commanded softly as he grabbed the saddle and larger 'petal' that Hiccup had made so that he could ride Toothless and went to work hooking them on. He was hoping that this would ease both

their minds, at least for a little while. Stoick climbed onto the dragon, feeling Toothless adjust himself to Stoick's weight before giving him a quick scratch under the chin. 'Are you ready?"

Toothless nodded, taking a few steps before pushing himself off the ground. It felt good to fly again. Toothless listened to Stoick's heavy breathing as he flew across the island, and knew that the large man felt just as miserable as he did. So many times he'd listened as Hiccup talked about his father, how much he worried about disappointing the man. If Hiccup could see just how hurt his father was by his absence, then Toothless was sure that Hiccup wouldn't worry anymore.

The sun was rising over the horizon, its brilliant light reflecting off of the calm ocean waters. Stoick stared out into the fading, almost transparent pinks and oranges as they became the days blue skies. He watched the rising suns light chase away the shadows on Berk, waking his people. It had been Hiccup who'd shone him this view of their home, who had taught him that there was more to their world then he'd believed.

Stoick couldn't hold back the solitary tear that broke free from his tough exterior as he thought of that moment. Though Hiccup had only been gone a day, it felt like so much more. Toothless glided down toward the tops of the trees, and the scent of the leaves filled Stoick's nostrils. He promised himself then that he would bring Hiccup home alive, and they would share mornings like this upon their dragons. Flying as Chief and successor, father and son.

The thick clouds of smoke rising from the black smiting hut assured Stoick that Gobber was all ready up and at work to restock their armory. They would need all or the weapons they could hold when they faced Alvin and his men. Stoick could feel the rage coursing through himself at just the thought of Alvin. He would make him pay, and he would bring an end to the outcasts attempts at taking Berk.

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Hiccup awoke to the endless darkness that he was becoming accustomed to. He'd lost all concept of time in his dark cell, but he was sure it must be morning. He was so used to waking early to fly with toothless, that he'd started doing it on his own. His heart sank as he thought of his dragon. He missed the feeling of the air around him as they flew together, souring as one being through the skies of berk.

He'd give anything to be home now, fling the skies with his friends. He could almost see the twins shoving at each other, the heads of their dragon mimicking them. Snotlout trying to give Hookfang orders, and fishlegs lovingly stroking Meatlug. And Astrid, looking fiercely beautiful as she and stormfly challenged himself and Toothless.

It hurt to think of home as he felt the cool walls of the dark cell against his back. He could feel the warmth of the small terror still at his side, her small body rising and falling with each heavy breath. Hiccup moved his hands over her, his fingers bumping along the numerous scars the outcasts had left. He'd decided to call her Scarlette. The name seemed cruel at first, but those scars were

testament to her determination to live, to fight back. She was strong for as small and beaten she was, and Hiccup admired that. He wanted to be just like her, strong and determined, despite the pain.

"Its going to be okay Scarlette." he assured her, feeling her shift with the effort of waking. She nudged her head against his palm, smelling it for any sign of food.

Hiccup felt his stomach groan, the pain of unindulged hunger coursing through him. "I know." He whispered on an unsteady breath. "I'm hungry too."

Hiccup tried to distract himself from the pain as it continued to grow. It had been at least a day since he had eaten anything. He crawled around the cell, feeling the walls with his hands as he tried to find a weak spot. In Alvin's brief visits he hadn't really had time to study the prison, and this was the first time he'd been alone and unshackled. He could hear Scarlette's claws tapping against the stone floor as she followed him, and he took comfort in the sound. It was nice not to be alone anymore.

He'd made it to the far corner of the cell when he saw the torchlight growing in the hall of the tunnel. Alvin was coming. As strong as hiccup wanted to be, he was still afraid of the large outcast, and he pushed himself against the wall of that corner, watching with hollow eyes as the light became brighter.

"thought you'd be up." Alvin mumbled as he unlocked the door to the cell. Alvin wasn't alone, the outcast who'd brought scarlette was with him, holding a small wooden bowl of gruel in his large, dirty hands.

Alvin placed the torch in the holder on the wall while the other man stayed near the door to the cell, smiling mockingly at Hiccup and the small terror. Upon seeing them, scarlette had began to growl, standing at Hiccup's side.

Alvin chuckled, taking a few steps toward Hiccup. The change in the terror's demeanor wasn't lost to him. Just yesterday it had been attacking everyone who went near it, and today, it was acting as a protector to the young viking. "How did you do it?" Alvin asked.

Hiccup shook his head, his eyes trailing back to the bowl in the other viking's hands. "You can't do it." he said softly.

Alvin marched forward, ignoring the growl from the terror as he stood towering over Hiccup. "How?" he demanded.

Hiccup tore his eyes away from the bowl, staring up at Alvin with utter distaste. "I wont help you."

Alvin reached toward hiccup, grunting as the terror bit into his arm. In a fit of rage he shook his arm violently until the terror lost her grip and hit the wall, falling onto the floor. Hiccup immediately turned toward her, trying to crawl to her side when Alvin grabbed him by the collar of his shirt and lifted him off of the ground. Hiccup kicked his legs furiously, trying to get loose as Alvin shoved him against the wall, sending waves of pain down his surly bruised back.

Alvin smiled, noticing the worry in Hiccup's face for the little dragon. "Vork," He turned toward the other outcast, gesturing with his free hand toward the terror.

Vork set the bowl on the floor and walked over to the hurt terror, and kicked her. The screeching roar from her hurt body almost brought tears to Hiccup's eyes.

Alvin nodded, and Vork kicked her again, harder.

Hiccup couldn't turn away from her pain anymore as her hurt cries resonated in his ears. After the third kick he closed his eyes and nearly screamed for them to stop.

Alvin chuckled, looking up at Hiccup. "I thought that'd work." He said, rotting breath assaulting Hiccup's nostrils. "Now, show me how to conquer the dragons, or that one gets hurt."

Hiccup could hear Scarlette growling at Vork, trying to be strong despite the hurt in her small body. He wanted to be as strong as she was, but he couldn't bare to see her hurt again. "Okay." he whispered, feeling defeated and beaten.

Alvin dropped Hiccup, laughing as he stumbled to keep from falling. "I'll be back in an hour." Alvin laughed, summoning Vork to follow him. They left the torch and the bowl of gruel as they left.

As soon as they were out of sight Hiccup crawled toward the bowl and brought it over toward Scarlette, setting it before her. His mouth watered as he looked into the bowl, felt its warmth against his shaking hands. He knew that he was starving, that he might not get another chance to eat, but he felt like he owed this to her for trying to protect him.

He watched her limp toward the bowl, looking at him as if waiting for permission before putting her head in the bowl and eating. Hiccup listened to the purr like growl as she ate, greedily lapping at the gruel as her small body shook. She was such a lovely shade of deep green, the scars like lighter green stripes across her back and stomach. She stopped as she neared the bottom of the bowl, hesitantly moving away and looking up at Hiccup.

"Go ahead." he said softly, it took everything he had not to take the bowl away from her. "You deserve it." he offered a tired smile, trying to be comforting.

Scarlette used her head to push the bowl closer to Hiccup before looking back up at him.

"Are you sure?" Hiccup whispered.

She pushed the bowl until it bumped against his hand.

"Thank you." hiccup picked up the almost empty bowl and leaned it against his trembling lips. There was about five or six spoonfuls left, but he was thankful for every drop. He felt the warm gruel slid down his throat and into his stomach. It hurt to finally have food, but he forced it to stay down. He needed it of he was going to survive this.

When the bowl had been emptied Hiccup sat back against the wall, smiling as Scarlette climbed into his lap. He scratched her chin as he stared at the door to the cell, trying to think of what to do next. If he helped Alvin, then he'd be betraying everyone he knew and cared about, but if he didn't, he was no longer the only one who'd suffer the consequences. He was torn between what he knew he needed to do to protect his home, and what he would have to do to protect the small Dragon in his lap.

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Astrid had gathered the other teens at the academy, and was waiting for the bickering to cease before she would tell them why. Stoick had told her to find proof against Mildew, and while it might be easier on her own, she knew that without the others, it would still be her word against Mildew's. She stood, arms crossed and gaze determined as she others stood around her, the chatter only growing.

"Why are we here?" Snotlout complained. "Can we even have dragon training class without Hiccup?"

"Its your fault for putting the hole in Mildew's roof." Ruffnut blamed her brother as she shoved him.

"You did it." Tuffnut said back, punching her in the arm.

"Um, guys..." Fishlegs said meekly, trying to get them to be quiet.

After a few more minutes of the bickering Astrid stomped her foot down. "Enough!" She yelled. "Do you guys want to help Hiccup or not?"

The arena became silent as they all turned toward her, waiting to hear her plan.

Astrid cleared her throat, suddenly at a loss for words. "We all know that Mildew had something to do with the outcasts kidnapping Hiccup, its up to us to find the proof."

"But how are we going to do that?" Fishlegs asked, stepping forward. "Everyone else believes Mildew's story about being knocked out."

"he's right." Snotlout said, picking his nose.

"Stoick doesn't." Astrid said. "He's just as suspicious as I am."

"I knew it." ruffnut said, crossing her arms.

"I knew it first." Tuffnut mumbled. "I told her and she didn't believe me." He pointed at his sister.

"Liar!" Ruffnut exclaimed, punching her brother in the arm.

"Stop it!" Astrid yelled, pinching the bridge of her nose as she shook her head. If this kept up then they wouldn't be much help at all. "It doesn't matter who knew, what matters is that we know. We have to find a way to prove Mildew guilty, not just for helping the

outcasts, but for betraying berk."

"Thats a lot of pressure." Fishlegs said, moving closer to the sleeping meatlug.

"Why don't we just ask him?" Snotlout said, pulling his finger from his nose and crossing his arms.

"He's not going to tell the truth, moron." Ruffnut chuckled, watching Snotlout frown at being called a moron.

"We could beat the truth out of him." Tuffnut said. "he's old and stuff."

"That wont work." Fishlegs argued. "It'll just look like we beat him into saying it."

"Yeah," Tuffnut shrugged his shoulders. "He'll tell the truth because we made him."

"Fishlegs is right," Astrid cut in. "If we just beat the truth out of him, no one will believe it. We need to find proof that he helped the outcasts, like evidence."

"How are we going to find it? I don't think he would have written it out for anyone to find." Fishlegs said .

"Well, what do we know about the day it happened?" Astrid asked, leaning against the wall.

"He didn't want us there." Snotlout offered. He was hoping that Astrid had forgotten him skipping out on helping.

"He was upset that I offered to help." Astrid said, remembering the way Mildew had glared at her.

"Wasn't he unconscious near the door?" Fishlegs said from Meatlug's side. He felt more at ease near his dragon. "Alvin wouldn't have knocked and waited for an answer, so Mildew would have had to see him."

"Yeah," Astrid replied. "he said that he didn't know what had happened, that hiccup had run into the woods." She stopped, remembering those moments of panic. "After he woke up, he pointed to the other side of the room and said hiccup was there..."

"How could Hiccup be there, and out in the woods?" Snotlout asked.

"Maybe there's another Hiccup." Tuffnut said, earning him another punch from his sister.

"Hiccup doesn't have a twin." She mocked. "That's us."

"I knew that." Tuffnut said, rubbing his shoulder.

"So Mildew was lying." fishlegs said, pulling the attention away from the bickering twins.

"When i left to get more nails, the fire in his yard wasn't lit."

Astrid said, more to herself than the others. "When we came back, the fire was lit."

"Maybe he was using it to signal the outcasts?" Fishlegs offered.

"Which would be how they knew exactly when to make their move!" Astrid smiled at Fishlegs. At least one of them was being helpful.

"He didn't seem to be worried about hiccup's vest either." Fishlegs said. "He didn't waste any time blaming the dragons."

"He blames dragons for everything." Snotlout threw in, wanting Astrid to pay more attention to him.

"If Stoick hadn't seen the tracks in the ground, he wouldn't have followed them to the shore. He might have believed mildew, and the dragons would be gone." Astrid said. Mildew had framed the dragons before, but that he would go this far to try and get rid of them disgusted her. She turned toward Stormfly and climbed onto her back. She needed to see something.

"where are you going?" Fishlegs asked, climbing on his own dragon.

"To Mildew's house, I need to see something..." Mildew's house was usually pretty dirty, she just hoped he hadn't cleaned up yet.

"I'm coming too." Snotlout said, jumping on Hookfang and earning a disgruntled growl.

"No, if we all go then Mildew might see us." She said.

"But what if you need protecting?" Snotlout wiggled his eyebrows and flexed his arms.

"I'll be fine." Astrid said before taking off. This early in the day, she was sure that Mildew would be in town, probably trying to rally the others into getting rid of the dragons. He was still trying to blame them for the blood on Hiccup's vest.

Astrid tried to clear her mind as she flew, but her worry was gnawing at her. Alvin was a large, angry man, and as clever as Hiccup was, if Alvin resorted to violence he didn't stand much of a chance. She'd hardly slept at all as she'd tried to think of ways to prove Mildew guilty, as she'd worried about Hiccup. She was sure that Alvin wouldn't kill him, he needed him after all, but there was no doubt in her mind that Alvin would hurt Hiccup to get what he wanted.

She landed stormfly out of sight of Mildew's house, deciding it was best not to be seen if he was home. Walking through the woods, she couldn't help but remember the fear that had consumed her as she had followed the tracks leading to Hiccup's discarded vest. It had torn her apart to find it.

Mildew was outside of his house, tending to his crops as he hummed a cheery tune. He wasn't distraught at all. She waited until he disappeared behind the corner of the house to sprint across the yard, ducking under one of the windows. Slowly, she lifted her head to look

inside, \_Mildew must still be out back...\_. She thought as she peered toward the planks of wood she and hiccup had been using to repair the roof.

After a few deep breathes she moved toward the door, carefully letting herself in. As quietly as she could, she moved across the room toward the planks. Looking at the differences in the layers of dust on the floor. She could see her footprints from the other day, along with Hiccup's. The odd shape of his prosthetic foot stood out against the normal prints. When she got closer to the pile of wood, she noticed the large blob of disturbed dust. She knelt over it, studying the shape. Someone had been laying here, fighting in the dust.

She looked back over the prints in the dust, there was one set leading toward pile of wood and away again that didn't match the others. Larger prints. Hiccup had been laying here, she was sure of it. A brownish red caught her eyes as she looked over the prints near the blob on the floor. She leaned closer, bringing her hands over her mouth the quiet the gasp. It was dried blood! There wasn't much, but she was willing to bet everything that it was Hiccup's, and that his vest had been destroyed right here.

Astrid heard the back door open and close, and quickly raced back toward the front door, quietly closing it behind her. She ran at full speed toward the forest where she had hidden stormfly. She needed to find Stoick, to tell him what she'd seen before Mildew had a chance to get rid of what little evidence they might have.

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Hiccup pushed himself to his feet when he heard the sounds of footsteps coming down the tunnel. It had been a while since Alvin had left, and he was sure that he was coming back now. He looked down at Scarlette, watching as she arched her back and let the low growl vibrate from her snarling mouth.

Alvin and Vork appeared moments later, mocking smiles on their faces as they let themselves into the cell. "Over here, dragon conqueror." Alvin smiled, his yellow teeth gleaming in the torchlight.

Hesitantly, Hiccup walked toward Alvin. He still didn't know what he was going to do, but he knew that angering Alvin wouldn't help himself or Scarlette. Without a word Alvin grabbed Hiccup's arm and snapped a shackle over each wrist. The shackles were connected by a short length of chain, which had another length in the middle, its end in Alvin's hands.

Vork moved toward Scarlette, jumping toward her as he struggled to grab onto her and hold her still. In her anger she spit a ball of fire toward him, snarling and she pressed herself against the wall.

"Make it stop." Alvin warned, glaring down at Hiccup.

"Scarlette," hiccup called to her, seeing her drop her guard as she waited to see what he wanted. "It's going to be okay." He hated the taste of the lie.

Seeing his chance, Vork lunged at the distracted dragon and tackled her to the ground, quickly snapping the thick metal collar around her neck before struggling to put the muzzle back on. She clawed furiously as it was buckled in place and Vork yanked at the chain that held her like a leash.

Hiccup couldn't look into her large questioning eyes as they were both lead through the tunnels of the outcasts lair. She had trusted him, and he was betraying her. Hiccup stumbled as Alvin jerked on the chain attached to his shackles, trying desperately not to fall. The hunger and sleep deprivation were making him feel weak. They continued forward, through a narrow hall toward a brightly growing patch of light. For the first time in what felt like days, Hiccup could smell fresh air as he realized they were going outside of the mountain.

Hiccup blinked against the bright light of the afternoon sun, goosebumps rising on his arms as he felt the chilled breeze brush over him. In the stagnant heat of the mountain lair, he'd almost forgotten how cool the outside world could be. He held back a laugh at the makeshift replica of the arena on berk that the outcasts had built as he was lead inside.

"If anything goes wrong, You'll pay for it." Alvin warned he halted. "And so will the dragon." He smiled at Vork, who was keeping an almost choking hold on Scarletts's leash. "Understand?"

Hiccup nodded, his gut wrenching at what he was about to do.

"What dragon do we start with?" Alvin asked, gesturing to the doors with crudely carved names of dragons over them.

Hiccup took a moment to think. It would be too easy to give Alvin the most difficult dragon, but there was the chance that if it attacked Alvin, it might kill him as well. Hiccup didn't want to die here, not like this. Alvin wasn't the smartest man He'd ever met, but he wasn't completely stupid either, he'd know if Hiccup were setting him up. With a heavy sigh Hiccup dropped his gaze and muttered softly. "The Gronckle. "

\*\*A/N:\*\* I'm sorry for the delay in an update, I just haven't been feeling myself lately. I know that its no excuse, its just hard to focus on writing with so much going on in my head. I tried to make this chapter longer, and better to make up for the wait, hopefully you guys like it.

~ I don't know why, but my spell check stopped working, so I'm sorry for anything I didn't catch while proof reading. Hopefully, I'll have an update faster for the next chapter.

## 7. Chapter 7

Hiccup watched as two outcasts stepped in front of the door labeled Gronckle, his heart sinking at the thought of what he was doing. He dint want to help Alvin, it was utter betrayal to his tribe, his father... But he couldn't bare to see Scarlette hurt, and his own body was becoming too sore and weak to keep fighting. He was sure that it would take Alvin many tries to achieve his goal, and in the meantime, Hiccup could only hope that his father was coming.

Alvin stepped beside Hiccup, a growl like chuckle erupting from his throat. "This better not be a trick, boy." He pushed Hiccup forward, laughing as the young viking stumbled over his own feet.

The doors were slowly pulled open, the outcasts' hands on their swords should anything go wrong. Hiccup watched as the Gronckle burst through the doors, around its neck a tight chain attached to a ring in the stone floor. The dragon pulled at the chain as it growled through the muzzle it wore. There was endless hate in its large eyes as it looked at each of the outcasts, then to Hiccup. Within that hate, Hiccup could see the sadness the Gronckle harbored at its situation.

"I'm sorry." Hiccup whispered as he took a cautious step forward, holding his hand out. He swallowed his fear as the great dragon growled at him, its narrow eyes almost glowing. "I wont hurt you," He said soothingly. "I'm not like them."

Hiccup ignored the grunt from Alvin as he continued toward the Gronckle, talking with quiet confidence. He stopped walking a few feet in front of the dragon, feeling its hot breath rush over him with each heavy breath. "It's okay," He said softly, reaching out. "Please," He begged quietly, so that the outcasts couldn't hear him. "I'm your friend, I can get you out of here."

The Gronckle watched Hiccup carefully, looking over his small form for any sign of a weapon. It knew the dangers the humans posed, after seeing its fellow dragons slain and beaten. It let a loud growl through the muzzle preventing its flames, warning the human away. Never trust a human, it thought to itself. Never let your guard down.

Hiccup looked over his shoulder to Alvin's sneering face, feeling the fear in his own gut grow. "Hurry up." Alvin sneered, nodding at Vork.

Chills ran down Hiccup's spine as he heard the angry whimper from Scarlette as Vork yanked on the chains around her small body. It made him sick to see the way the dragons on this island were treated. After a few, deep breathes Hiccup turned back to the Gronckle, taking a few more steps toward it. It raised its heavy tail defensively as it continued to growl.

"I wont hurt you." Hiccup repeated, his hand still held out. "I want to help you, to set you free." He whispered, standing at the end of its snout. He closed his eyes against the harshly warm burst of air as the Gronckle huffed at him. He was sure that if the dragon didn't kill him, Alvin would. These dragons had been so mistreated that Hiccup didn't blame the Gronckle for its distrust. "Please..." He said again as he touched the Gronckle's snout, waiting for the tail to hit him.

The Gronckle could feel the urge to kill the small human before it burning through its entire body. It wasn't sure what was happening, why the blows from heavy weapons had not yet hit it. It kept its eyes on Hiccup, occasionally glancing at the others watching them. This human was very small compared to them, its flesh held dark bruises. It looked past Hiccup, to the small terror growling at it.

Don't hurt him. She growled protectively through her muzzle. He's here to help us.

The Gronckle set its eyes on Hiccup's hand, its body tensed at his hand touched its snout. Were it not for the muzzle he might have bitten the hand off. He let the trembling hand rest upon his snout, feeling the racing heartbeat beat against his snout. The Terror's persistent growls of protest calmed him, allowing him to hesitantly believe that this human was different. The Gronckle dropped its tail, nudging Hiccup's hand with cautious trust.

Hiccup opened his eyes, a wary smile creeping over his lips. "Thank you." He whispered. "I'll get you free, I promise." Hiccup lightly trail his hand over the Gronckle's face to the sensitive spot under its chin, scorching the spot relaxingly as he studied the muzzle.

"Bring me some fish." Hiccup called over his shoulder softly.

Hesitantly, a brutish Outcast brought over a small basket filled with old fish, setting it next to Hiccup as he backed away slowly. Taking a deep breath, Hiccup pulled at the rusted clasp on the muzzle, releasing it. It clattered loudly as it fell to the ground, causing Hiccup to jump. The Gronckle stretched its mighty jaws, its eyes never leaving the small viking before it. Hiccup reached into the basket and carefully offered the Gronckle the fish in his hands.

The Gronckle shifted its vision from Hiccup to the fish, waiting for the moment of betrayal. How many times had it been so close to eating, only to be beaten? It looked back to Hiccup, the wary smile over his soft face and accepted the fish, devouring it hastily. Hiccup nudged the basket closer with his foot, continuing to pet the Gronckle as it scarfed down the fish. His eyes studied the mass of scars covering its large body as it ate, his heart aching to let it free. The Gronckle may trust him, but he doubted it would ever trust Alvin, or any of the other Outcasts.

"Well?" Alvin asked impatiently, taking a step forward.

Hiccup shrugged his shoulders, not bothering to look at the Outcast behind him. "He trusts me, but,"

Alvin didn't let Hiccup finish. He stepped boldly forward, his hand reaching for the heavy chain around the Gronckle's throat. The Gronckle let out a warning growl as Alvin approached it, its eyes narrowing as the fire sparked in its throat. Alvin grabbed the chain, pulling on it harshly as the Gronckle roared angrily.

"What did you do?" Alvin snapped as he closed his large arms over the Gronckle's mouth, restraining its flames.

"It doesn't trust you." Hiccup bit back, stepping back defensively. "After the way you've treated it, it may never trust you."

Alvin ordered the nearby outcasts to re-secure the muzzle as he stormed toward Hiccup, hitting him sharply across the mouth. "Make it trust me." he ordered.

Hiccup cupped his hand over the stinging part of his face, shaking

his head. "I can't." He admitted, tears nearly in his eyes. "You can't abuse it, then expect it to trust you."

Alvin smiled crookedly, his yellow teeth glowing against the mid day light. "Then we'll just have to get new dragons." He growled as he pulled out his sword.

"No!" Hiccup screamed, jumping forward and grabbing Alvin's arm in an attempt to stop the larger Outcast. "No! You cant!"

Alvin threw Hiccup to the ground with one shake of his arm, ignoring the screams from the boy as he approached the now defenseless Gronckle. Hiccup sat upon the ground, frozen in time as he watched the dragon's eyes glow bright with anger, its tail rising to swing at Alvin. He felt the silent tears fall over his cheeks as those bright eyes dimmed and closed, the ground shaking as its body fell.

"We need new dragons." Alvin called to the cheering men. "Unbeaten." He turned toward Hiccup, wiping the blood from his sword onto his dirty pants. "It had better work." He whispered loudly, grabbing Hiccup by the hair and forcing him to his feet.

"You're a monster." Hiccup yelled, trying to pull himself free. "You will never ride a dragon!"

"Shut up." Alvin ordered as he dragged Hiccup back into the caves of the layer, toward the dark cell.

Hiccup couldn't stop the tears from falling as he tried to be stronger then he was, fighting vainly with Alvin's hold on him. He had betrayed his people in his attempt to help the Gronckle, and he had betrayed its trust in taming its anger. He was jolted from his thoughts as his body hit the rough wall, Alvin wasting no time as he forced the shackles shut over Hiccup's wrists.

"My father will kill you." Hiccup promised darkly. "Even if you manage to ride a dragon, you wont win."

Alvin hit Hiccup again, bashing his head against the wall. "Talk all ye want." Alvin grunted, grabbing a thick leather strap from his belt. "But we will ride Dragons, and Berk will be ours." He forced the leather strap into Hiccup's mouth, securing it before stepping away. "And it'll all be thanks to you." He snickered as he stepped toward the opening to the cell.

Vork dragged Scarlette into the cell, dropping the heavy chain on the floor and leaving the muzzle on as he joined Alvin. Te door was locked, and they took the torch with them, leaving the boy and dragon alone in darkness.

Hiccup pulled at the shackles holding him, knowing that he couldn't break free. He screamed in hurt frustration as his head fell against his chest and the tears tore through him. He didn't want to see anymore Dragon's hurt, didn't want to be hit anymore. Over and over again he yelled at himself for being so small, so weak in comparison to the other Vikings of his home.

Home... More then ever, he wished he was back on Berk. Safe on the island of his tribe, with his father, Toothless... Astrid... It hurt to think of how he had almost helped Alvin in his fight to destroy

them. He could hear Scarlette's small growls as she pulled against the heavy chain, moving slowly toward his feet where she curled up, trying to offer comfort. I just want to go home... Hiccup thought as he cried in the darkness of the cell.

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Stoick was busing himself with the new weapons, hoping that focusing on them would free his troubled mid from the haunting thoughts that had been plaguing it. He placed the finished weapons upon the racks, organizing and counting them. With empty motions he handed Gobber and the others assisting him the materials they needed as they continued to work. The heavy scents of smoke and sweat filled the area as the men continued to forge the new weapons, the occasional cough or grunt standing out against the clangs of the hammers. It had been a while since they had made so much use of these tools, and most of the men were more then comfortable to be doing it again.

Vikings were fighters, and the peaceful life, while enjoyable, had been straining them. They needed to feel their hands on the hilts of their blades, the adrenaline of battle. The glory of a true viking death. No one wanted to be brought back to that life this way, but they were willing to go into battle under the cause of protecting their home, and rescuing the heir that had brought peace to their homes.

Stoick took comfort in their commitment, and pride in their lack of pity. He didn't want to be pitied by these men and women. To look that weak as a chief would bring disgrace upon him, and the son who would one day rule after him. He looked stronger then he was feeling.

"Have you slept?" Gobber asked casually as he handed Stoick a newly finished sword.

"Enough." Stoick replied.

"We'll get Hiccup back." Gobber assured him.

"I know." Stoick replied, scratching his beard. "It high time we dealt with these outcasts properly."

"Aye." Gobber switched his hammer hand back to its hook and pulled Stoick out of the smokey smithing hut. He waited until they were away from the ears of the men to set a comforting hand on his old friends shoulder. "How are you doing?"

Stoick kept his features strong as he looked at Gobber, the hurt deep within his eyes clear. "I'm worried." He confessed. "Alvin is a ruthless warrior, and Hiccup..."

"He may not be very strong, but he's smart." Gobber said confidently. "He'll do what he has to to survive until we get there."

Stoick nodded his head, sighing heavily. "I'll kill Alvin."

Gobber nodded, following Stoick's gaze out into the horizon. "That you will."

"Stoick!" Astrid's voice hit them as they turned to see her and

Stormfly descending towards them. Gracefully, she landed the dragon and jumped onto the ground before running toward the two older vikings. She stopped before them, pausing to catch her breath.

"What did you find" Stoick asked, hoping. He didn't want it to be true, that one of his own would betray them all, but he needed to know. The suspicions had been nagging at him, and he knew that Mildew was none to fond of Hiccup, or the dragons.

"It had to have been Mildew! His story, and the signs at his house don't match up." She exclaimed, nodding at Gobber who was looking at the two of them curiously. "The dust on the floor, it looked like someone was laying there, and there was dried blood." She could still feel the blood on her fingers. "And footprints, one set coming into the house that matched the ones we followed into the woods."

Stoick smiled tiredly at her. "Was there anything else?"

Astrid brushed her bangs out of her face, smiling despite the situation. "The fire in the yard, it wasn't lit when I left. I'm sure that he was using it to signal the outcasts, they knew exactly when to make their move, and unless they had help, it would have taken more than one of them."

Stoick placed a hand on her shoulder, grinning. "Lets go talk to Mildew." He said darkly. Stoick whistled, and toothless jumped to his feet, gazing up eagerly.

Toothless had been laying beside the smithing hut all morning, waiting for anything to happen. His mind had been just as busy with worry, and his anger steadily growing. When he found Hiccup, and he swore on his remaining tail that he would, he would tear the men who'd taken him apart. He brushed up against Stoick, looking into the viking's dark eyes and nodded his head.

As Stoick mounted Toothless, Astrid climbed back upon Stormfly, waiting for Stoick to take the lead. She hid the smile that was creeping over her face. She knew that Mildew had been behind Hiccup's kidnapping, and she was ready to see him brought to justice. But even that bit of peaceful joy couldn't dismiss the fact that one of their own had done this.

They flew in silence toward Mildew's home, their eyes set on their destination. Stoick watched the houses and lands of Berk glide steadily by, the people busy preparing for the coming battle. In exposing Mildew's deeds, they were not only achieving justice for hiccup, but for all the people of Berk. Mildew had put them all in danger.

Stoick landed first, wasting no time as he climbed off of Toothless and glared at the house before him. Astrid was only a few moments behind him, and she was quick to climb down from Stormfly and stand beside him. Eager to show him what she had seen. The footprints, though faded, were still visible, leading away from the house and into the woods. They both stared at them, knowing what they meant.

Mildew was at his door before they could knock, Fungus faithfully by his side. He offered a crooked smile as he watched them step closer. His eyes gave away the disgust and anxiety he was trying to

hide.

"Stoick," He exclaimed with false enthusiasm. "How the restocking of the armory going?"

"At this rate, we'll be ready sooner than expected." Stoick answered, crossing his arms.

Mildew leaned on his staff, listening to the soft clank of the dragon's teeth as that collided. "It wouldn't be necessary if it hadn't been for those dragons." He said harshly.

Stoick glared at Mildew, studying the strain in his face. He was nervous, he was hiding something. He hadn't anted it to be true, that one of his own could betray them so horribly. He sighed heavily, his features hardening. "I need to go inside." He said, not waiting for Mildew to grant him permission.

"What for?" Mildew asked gruffly.

Stoick turned toward Astrid, ignoring Mildew's question. "Show me."

Astrid nodded, pushing passed Mildew. She felt relieved to see that Mildew still hadn't cleaned up. She walked toward the out of place footprints, kneeling next to them. "They're the same as the ones we followed into the woods." She moved toward the large disturbance in the dust, she could almost see Hiccup laying there. "This spot," She traced it lightly, biting her lip to hold back tears. "It looks like someone was laying here, struggling. Someone small." She cast her eyes toward Mildew, glaring.

Stoick looked down on the spot, the disturbance was Hiccup's size. He saw the puddle of dried blood and felt his fists clench so hard that his knuckles turned white. "What happened here?" He asked absently, trying to control the anger building within himself.

"Whoever knocked me out must have taken him." Mildew replied defensively. He could feel the sweat trailing down his neck.

Stoick stood straight, his eyes narrowed. "You said before, that Hiccup had gone out to investigate a noise."

Mildew's grip on the staff tightened, his mouth moving without sound.

"Why did you do it?" Stoick's voice was like cold fire.

"I didn't do anything." Mildew protested.

"I know you hate the dragons, but to do this..." Stoick shook his head, breathing heavily.

"You've no proof I did anything." Mildew snapped, stepping back. "I was attacked too."

"What about the fire you lit after I left?" Astrid demanded. "What was it for?"

"I wasn't signaling anyone!" Mildew growled, instantly biting his

tongue.

Stoick could feel the hatred boiling under his skin, driving him mad as his hand rested on the hilt of his sword. "We didn't mention a signaling."

Mildew shook his head, knowing that it was pointless to argue any further. "I did what I had to, for Berk, for Molden."

"You've betrayed Berk, and the memory of your son." Stoick growled coldly. "Molden was a warrior, and he died protecting his home."

Mildew chuckled sarcastically, looking at Stoick with hate and disgust. "Your boy betrayed us. He brought the very beasts that killed hundreds of us into our homes. The same creatures that killed my son. The Berk he died protecting is gone now."

"Why did you give Hiccup to the Outcasts?" Stoick demanded quietly.

"Because I wanted him gone." Mildew replied honestly. "Without him to defend the dragons, they would have been killed, banished. Berk could have been right again, worth the death my son gave for it."

"Molden wouldn't have wanted this." Stoick replied as he grabbed a length of leather from his belt. "You've disgraced his memory with your actions." Stoick grabbed Mildew's arms harshly, not sparing him any pain as he bound his wrists and took the staff. He looked at the teeth that hung from its leather straps, the teeth of the dragon that had killed Molden. "You will be executed as a traitor." Stoick growled. "There will be no glory for you, and everyone will know what you've done. Not only against my son, but against Berk."

Mildew said nothing as he was lead out of his home, the anger within his feeble body causing it to shake. He dared not say it aloud, but he hoped that Alvin killed Hiccup, that Stoick would know the pain of loosing a son. His pain.

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\*\*A/N: \*\*It's taken a while to get this chapter up, I know. I needed to finish Allusion of suffering, and I've been pretty sick, but here it is. I also went back and tried to fix the errors in the previous chapter, because they were pretty bad. I hope you guys like this chapter, and that the next one will be up soon.

## 8. Chapter 8

Hiccup hung against the shackles on his wrists, feeling the warmed metal digging into his skin. Though he couldn't see anything in the infinite darkness of his cell, he could feel Scarlette curled up near his feet, offering comfort. His tears had long since stopped, but he still felt just as upset as he had when Alvin had brought him back into the dungeon room.

In the darkness, all he could see was the memory of the Gronckle's death, and the guilt he felt for it was unmeasurable. Alvin had killed it so easily, and Hiccup was sure that the other beaten

dragons were being killed as well. If Alvin couldn't use them, then he wouldn't let them live. He would just catch new dragons, and if they wouldn't bend to his will, then they would be killed as well. Hiccup didn't want to help the vile outcast master them, but he didn't think he could bare to see another one slaughtered.

As Hiccup tried to push away the memory he thought of home. How much longer would he be left here to suffer? Surely, his father knew by now what had happened, and he would be on his way to rescue him from this place. He hated Mildew for his part in all of it, and he knew that he would never be able to forgive him. Mildew had some some awful things before, but this...

Hiccup gritted his teeth against the leather strap in his mouth, feeling his thirst scratch at his dry throat. His body shook with hunger, and the dehydration left him dizzy. He could feel the bruises on his face pulsing as the hurt tried to heal itself. He'd never been in so much pain in all his life.

He knew that he was running out of time, and that the fight was all but gone from him. If Alvin didn't kill him, then the pain and hunger would. Scarlette's low growl echoed off of the dark walls as she pushed herself to her feet, her bright eyes glaring at the door to the cell.

Hiccup watched the growing speck of light as Alvin walked back down the hall, torch in hand and Vork by his side. Despite how he felt, he tried to make himself look mean as Alvin unlocked the door and walked inside smiling mockingly.

"Sleep well?" He laughed thickly as he placed the torch in its hold on the wall.

Hiccup didn't try to respond, he didn't have the strength. Scarlette did the talking for him as she growled through the muzzle, standing in front of him protectively.

"Shut up, beast." Alvin growled back, kicking her to the side. He leaned toward hiccup, rotten breath assaulting the teens nostrils with every heavy breath. "No more games boy, today you do what your here for, or that one dies." He spat, pointing at Scarlette.  
"Understood?"

Hiccup nodded, biting back tears as he felt his hope slowly drain away.

Chuckling, Alvin unlocked the shackles and watched as Hiccup fell to the floor, yelping as his knees hit the hard floor. Alvin grabbed Hiccup by the hair and pulled him to his feet, roughly untying the leather strap and taking it from his mouth. "We've got new dragons now, this had better work."

"It will." Hiccup replied quietly, trying not to squirm in the harsh hold on his hair and arm.

Again he was lead through the halls of the Outcast's lair, back to the makeshift copy of the arena on Berk. The cold morning air rushed over him, forcing him fully awake as he looked at the Outcasts watching him. Dark eyes staring from behind unkempt beards and dirty faces. He could feel Alvin's fingers digging into his shoulder as he

motioned for the first door to be released, revealing a new Gronckle.

"Show me." Alvin commanded, pushing Hiccup forward.

Hiccup took a deep breath, looking back at Scarlette. He would do everything he could to keep her safe. "You have to gain its trust," He told Alvin, taking careful steps forward. He held out his hand to the Gronckle, watching as Alvin did the same. "Take your hand off your sword."

Alvin stared at Hiccup, cautiously moving his free hand away from the weapon at his side. "Is this a trick?"

Hiccup shook his head. "If you aren't willing to trust him, then he won't trust you. I didn't have a weapon yesterday."

Alvin shrugged his heavy shoulders, mimicking everything Hiccup did as they approached the Gronckle. He spoke to it softly, as Hiccup did, his words like shadows of the boys. He watched nervously as the great dragon slowly let down its guard, its eyes widening as it hesitantly accepted them coming closer.

"It's okay." Hiccup promised the dragon, "we wont hurt you." He wanted to believe the words he was saying, to know that the dragon wouldn't be killed. He stopped Alvin as they stood just before the Gronckle, shaking his head. "Wait until he acknowledges you." Hiccup held his hand out to the dragon, watching as Alvin did the same.

The Gronckle looked from boy the man, trying to understand their intentions. Just last night it had been captured and brought to this place that stank of dragon's blood. It had been locked behind heavy doors as its freedom was chained away. So much cruelty, and now these humans were extending their hands to it, offering friendship.

He looked past them, to the tiny bound terror who was staring back, nodding her scared head at him. She let out a soft roar from inside her muzzle, assuring him that he could trust the boy. The Gronckle turned his attention back to the humans, and placed his snout against the boys hand.

"Why isn't he doing it to me?" Alvin demanded softly, not wanting to upset the beast.

Hiccup scratched the Gronckle's chin, hoping that it would do as Alvin wanted. "Be calm, and let it know that it can trust you." Hiccup replied softly.

Alvin stared at the dragon, seeing it stare back. "It's okay dragon, join us, and you will be well looked after." He tried his hardest to be more like Hiccup in that moment, to gain its trust as he had. If the Vikings of Berk could do this, then so could the outcasts, and they would be better.

The Gronckle looked into Alvin, and found belief in the man's words. He moved his head away from Hiccup, and pressed his snout against Alvin's hands.

Alvin felt the smile growing over his dirty face as he moved his hand to the dragon's chin, as he had watched Hiccup do. "Can I ride it?"

He asked, his voice the most cheerful Hiccup had ever heard it.

"I think so." Hiccup's voice was nearly a whisper. He had betrayed his entire tribe.

Alvin walked around the dragon, touching its back to make his intentions known. He waited until he was sure the dragon wouldn't attack, and slowly climbed upon him. As a younger man, he had ridden a horse that his own father had stolen. It had been years since the horse had died, but he remembered how to ride it and applied those memories to the dragon. He held onto the Gronckle tightly as it lifted off the ground, his heart racing with a fear he refused to acknowledge.

The sensation of flying was one that Alvin had no words for. The stagnant air of the Outcast island brushed past him, bringing with it a sense of freshness that made his head spin. He looked down at the other outcasts on the ground, almost laughing at how small they looked from these heights. He had the secret now, and berk would be theirs!

Alvin landed the Gronckle back within the makeshift arena, scratching its chin before moving toward Hiccup. "Good job, boy." He grinned, grabbing Hiccup by the arm. He turned toward the Outcasts who were watching him, waiting. "Feed the beast!" He called out loudly, "and prepare the other dragons. Tonight we learn to ride, and tomorrow we sail for Berk!"

The Outcasts cheered loudly, their gruff voices rising as they entered the arena with food and hope. If Alvin, the meanest of them all could do it, then so could they. They would take berk from the Hooligan tribe, and finally leave their vile home behind.

"In one night, these dragons wont be ready to go into battle with you." Hiccup cried as he was pulled away from the Gronckle, to where Vork stood with Scarlette. "Its suicide."

Alvin laughed, still exhilarated from the flight. "They'll be ready enough. Once Berk is ours, we'll have plenty of Dragons, and now that we have the secret, nothing can stop us. Don't forget boy, with you as a hostage, your father wont be as fierce. He wouldn't risk getting you killed."

Hiccup tried to pull away from Alvin's grasp, feeling the tightened grip bruise his already sore arms. If he could get to the Gronckle, he could go home and warn his father...

Alvin's grip tightened to the point of cutting off the circulation in Hiccup's arm, causing him to scream out despite himself. He ignored the desperate words falling from the boys trembling lips as he dragged him back into the cave, toward the darkness of his cell.

The closer Hiccup got to the cell, the harder he fought. He didn't want to be locked away again, to be so powerless. He screamed and clawed at Alvin's arm with his free hand, watching his nails cut into the Outcast's skin. Alvin grunted angrily as he tried to catch Hiccup's free arm, growing tired of the boys struggling. When he couldn't catch Hiccup's other arm, he moved his grip to the boys wrist and twisted his arm behind his back, subduing him.

"I've had enough of your impudence." He growled as they came to the door of the cell. With great force he threw Hiccup into the cell, laughing as the boy tripped over his prosthetic foot and fell to the hard floor. He walked around Hiccup, kicking him in the abdomen before kneeling beside him and binding his hands behind his back, and then his ankles. "I was going to feed you, as a reward for conquering the dragon, but not anymore."

"I would rather die." Hiccup spat, his fear lost in his anger. "My father will kill you, even if am your hostage. He's a true viking, not the sorry excuse that you are."

Alvin turned Hiccup around and hit him strongly across the face, trying to shut hm up. "The Vikings of Berk have gone soft, they aren't warriors anymore. " Alvin snapped as he pulled the leather strap from his belt.

Hiccup laughed darkly as he stared his captor in the eyes. "You're afraid of my father, his strength. If you really believed that you were better, then you wouldn't have needed a hostage. You're a coward."

Alvin bent the strap and swung it at hiccup, snapping it over his cheek and leaving behind a large, red welt. "You will watch berk fall, and only after you've seen everyone you care about die, will you follow them." Alvin sneered as he tied the strap into Hiccup's mouth, quieting him. "I'll be back for you in the morning."

Alvin stormed past Vork, who was just arriving with Scarlette. "Hurry up." He demanded as Vork left the small Dragon in the cell, still chained and muzzled. "We've got work to do." Alvin pulled the dwindling torch from its holder in the wall and locked the cell, storming away angrily.

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\_From his window he could see the flames, and he knew that the dragons were attacking again. Another late night raid for what food the vikings had managed to collect after the last pillaging. He heard the rushed footsteps and softly clanking metal as Molden pulled on the light armor and unsheathed his sword. \_

"\_There are more then usual tonight." Mildew told his son, hoping that just once, he would stay home. \_

"\_Its nothing we cant handle." Molden smiled, the long scar over his face a pale reminder of the dangers he faced. "We're vikings."\_

\_Mildew sighed heavily, hearing the distant roars from the village. "There are plenty of vikings in town to fight. You haven't fully recovered yet." Last week Molden had received a nasty cut from the claws of a monstrous nightmare, and it had nearly killed him. The wound was still healing, slowly becoming another scar. \_

\_Molden smiled charismatically as he grabbed his shield and patted Fungus on the head. "Look after dad." He told his childhood pet.

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"\_Son," Mildew started, knowing that he couldn't stop Molden from

going. "Be careful." \_

"\_I will, father." He walked toward the door, turning back to look at him father with pained eyes. "Berk is our home, its people our family. We can't just stay back and watch the dragons take everything and burn us away." \_

\_Mildew stepped forward, placing a hand on his son's shoulder. "You are a true viking, I'm proud of you." \_

\_Molden smiled and walked out of the house, running toward the village with his sword raised. Mildew watched with tired eyes as the silhouette of his only son faded until he was gone. He sighed heavily, looking down at the sheep. His eyes widened as they fell onto the floor, seeing the spots of blood. He followed them with his eyes, out the door and down the path. The wound had reopened!

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\_Mildew grabbed the tall walking stick and ran as fast as he could after his son, but in his old age he was much slower. The spots became larger the closer he got to the village, the sounds of battle ringing in his ears. \_

\_The fighting was nearly done, most of the dragons leaving with their plunder. Mildew felt the heat of the burning buildings on his skin, the thick smoke burning his eyes. "Molden?" He called out, looking for his son. "Molden!" \_

\_He saw Stoick in the center of town, engaged in battle with a massive dragon covered in blood. Mildew held the staff tightly as he watched his chief take the beast down with his bare hands, his heartbeat raced as Stoick thrust his sword into the creatures gut. It had been many years since he'd had the strength to fight alongside his chief, but to watch Stoick still filled him with exhilaration.\_

\_His breath froze as Stoick caught his gaze, the ferocity in his eyes turning to sorrow. "Mildew..." \_

"\_have you seen Molden?" Mildew asked hurriedly. "His wound was open when he left." \_

\_Stoick shook his head, stepping closer to the older viking. "I'm sorry Mildew." \_

\_Mildew shook his head in disbelief, his face twisting into pain anger. "He cant be gone." \_

"\_He died an honorable death, protecting Berk, and my son." Stoick said, his hand gesturing to the seven year old Hiccup at Gobber's side. "He's in Valhalla now." \_

"\_And the beast that killed him?" Mildew asked scornfully.

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"\_Dead." Stoick replied, looking at the dragon he had just killed. "Tomorrow, we build the pyre and send his soul to the afterlife with honor." \_

\_Mildew walked toward the body of his son, his eyes tracing the long,

bloodied gashes. Only a short time ago the boy had been smiling at him, now he was gone. Mildew had never felt so hurt in all his life, no physical pain even compared. "I want the beasts teeth." He said to his chief, allowing a tear to fall. \_

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Mildew looked down at Fungus, who shared the cell with him because he'd refused to leave his side. He'd tried for years not to think of the night his son had died, the pain he had felt. He had nearly forgotten that Molden had saved Hiccup's young life the night he'd lost his own. Back in those days, Hiccup had been nothing more than a nuisance, but Molden must have seen something greater in him to give his life for the young boy.

Mildew hung his head against his frail chest, his hand motionless atop Fungus' head. In all of his hate he had forgotten why Molden had given his life that night. Molden knew that the boy would be something ore to the people of Berk, and had given everything to protect him and give him the chance to grow. But, even knowing that Molden had done what he believed in, Mildew could not forgive the circumstances of his death.

A dragon had killed his son, had taken away the only thing he had every truly cared about. And now those despicable beasts lived among the very people they had spent centuries killing. They were treated as friends despite all of the vikings they had killed, all because of the boy Molden had seen so much potential in. Mildew could not forgive the dragons, nor Hiccup for bringing them here.

"We've lived too long with this hate." mildew told the sheep with soft anger. "Years of pain have torn us apart. But I don't regret what I did..." Mildew could hear the heavy steps coming closer as the moment of his execution drew near. He'd never intended to die for his crime, but there was nothing he could do know. He'd made the mistake of trusting a treacherous, and he'd betrayed all that Molden had died to protect.

Stoick and Spitlout walked through the long hall toward the dungeon in silence. Despite Mildew's actions, it was never easy to execute one of their own. Stoick glared at the old viking with silent anger as Spitlout opened the door and shackled Mildew's thin wrists. No words were exchanged as Mildew was lead out of the dungeon cavern and into the center of town. He didn't look at the angry and disappointed faces of his tribe as he was brought forward, he simply held his head high and his face calm.

Spitlout stopped Mildew, holding his arm tightly as Stoick moved to stand before the traitor, eyes hard and Toothless at his side. "Today you face execution for treason, not only against your chief and heir, but to the very people of your tribe. You have conspired with our greatest enemy to bring about the downfall of all who stand before you. Do you have anything to say for yourself?" Stoick asked harshly.

Mildew shook his head, a cruel smile revealing missing teeth. "In my youth I fought to protect Berk from the dragons, my son died doing the same. He died, to save your son." Mildew said through gritted teeth. "Loosing him was hard enough, but to see you disgrace his memory by bringing the beasts into your homes..." Mildew looked to

people of the Hooligan tribe, shaking his head.

"I couldn't forgive that, nor your boy for causing it. Hiccup wasn't worth Molden's life, and I do not regret giving him to the Outcasts. I hope that Alvin kills him," Mildew said honestly. "So that you may understand the pain of loosing a son before his time."

It took great restraint for Stoick to control the anger building within his large body. He looked to the men he'd chosen for the execution, his brother, Spitlout, and his oldest friend, Gobber. "It's time." He said with thick hatred.

Mildew was thrown to the ground, held down with Stoick's heavy foot. "For your treason against your Tribe, and my son, you will be killed by way of the Blood Eagle, and your body left to the birds. You deserve no better." Stoick spat as he stepped away.

He pulled the sword from his belt, the same one he had used to kill the Dragon that had killed Molden and cut through Fungus, leaving the old sheep dead within moments. He watched as mildew growled in protest to the death of his son's pet, and his only companion.

Gobber took his hooked hand and cut through the clothes on Mildew's back, then into the flesh around his spine. He didn't let the screams bother him as he felt the flesh tear apart. Spitlout held Mildew down as Gobber used his full strength to break through Mildew's ribs, and Spitlout reached into the bloodied wound to pull them out, spreading them like blood stained wings. The screams had stopped, but the look they had left on Mildew's lifeless face could haunt a lesser man.

Stoick leaned forward and pulled Mildew's airless lungs through the wound as he sprinkled a handful of salt over the wound. "May you soul suffer for eternity." Stoick whispered loudly as he stepped away from the body and looked toward his people. "the traitor is dead, but his crime still lives. When we sail for the outcast's island, we do it as a tribe, and we will not be defeated. We wont allow Molden's death to be shamed by his fathers actions, instead we fight in memory of his courage and commitment to our home."

The people of the Hooligan tribe cheered loudly despite the horrible scene that had just passed. Justice had been brought to them with the death of the one who had tried to bring ruin upon them, and that was cause enough to rejoice. They knew that there would be casualties when they fought the outcasts, but to die in battle to protect their homes and heir was at least an honorable death. They spit at the bodies of the traitor and his sheep as they were dragged through the town, out toward the cliffs where they would be thrown to the birds.

Astrid watched with a tear in her eyes, though she didn't cry for Mildew. With every hour that passed she felt farther away from Hiccup, lost hope that he would be brought home alive. She had hoped that seeing Mildew brought to justice would calm the fear inside of herself, but it only strengthened it. She followed the members of her tribe to the cliffs, standing beside toothless as Mildew and Fungus were thrown over. She placed her hand on the Dragon's head, taking as much comfort as she was giving.

Toothless looked up at her, hatred glowing behind the hurt in his large eyes. "We'll get him back." She said softly as she looked out toward the horizon. Toothless let out a low roar, the sadness in the sound bringing fresh tears to her eyes.

She stayed at the cliffs edge as the villagers made their way back to finish preparing for the inevitable war that was upon them. She didn't move as Stoick approached her, Mildew's blood still on his hand.

"Are you okay?" Stoick asked as he used his clean hand to scratch Toothless' chin.

"I'm worried," She confessed. "Hiccup's been gone for so long..."

"Aye." Stoick said softly, knowing what she felt. "Alvin won't kill him, he needs Hiccup." Stoick took comfort in the thought, it was all he had.

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Hiccup had managed to push himself into a sitting position against the wall through hours of work. Everything on his body hurt, and the hard floor didn't help. Scarlette walked around him, rubbing her head against his bound hands comfortingly. Hiccup moved his hands over the muzzle on her head, trying to find the clasp that held it shut. The least he could do was try and get the horrid device off of her. It was surprisingly hard to do with his wrists bound, but he eventually was able to release it.

The muzzle fell to the floor with a loud clank, startling Hiccup as the silence was broken. He could feel Scarlette moving around his bound wrists, testing her teeth on the leather strap holding him. Once she found a spot where her teeth couldn't hurt him, she went to work on chewing through the strap, trying to release him as he had her.

As soon as his wrists were freed he went to work untying the strap from his ankles and from his mouth, flexing his jaw as it became free. Hiccup didn't know what he could do to escape, but he knew that he had to try. He couldn't sit back and wait to be rescued, not if he hoped to survive this. He moved around the cell blindly, touching the walls as he tried to find the bars that would lead to the door. Alvin would be expecting him to still be bound on the floor, giving him a momentary advantage. His hands found the bars and he followed them to the far end of the cell, where he would hide in the shadow cast by the stone wall.

Alvin didn't return until late into the night, the bobbing light of the torch giving him away. Hiccup could hear not only Alvin's footsteps, but Vork's as well. He wasn't entirely sure what he would do, even if he got past the two of them, the mountain was full of outcasts. He told himself that he just needed to get to the arena, if he got that far, then the rest would be easy.

Hiccup reached down to Scarlette, picking her up and telling her to stay quiet as Alvin and Vork got closer. The chain around her neck was heavy, but Hiccup was sure that he could carry her long enough to reach the other dragons. He held his breath as Alvin got to the door,

unlocking it before peering into the seemingly empty cell.

"Where is he..." He muttered under his breath as he stepped into the cell, looking at the spot where he'd left Hiccup to the discarded muzzle and straps.

Hiccup took advantage of the Outcast's distraction and rounded the shallow corner, bursting through the door. He let the furious yells pass over him as he ran, trying to remember every turn he'd been lead around. "It's going to be okay." He told the small dragon in his arms through rapid breaths. He hadn't realized just how weak he'd become until he'd started running.

Though he could feel his malnourished body screaming at him to stop, Hiccup pushed forward. The pounding steps of the pursuing Outcasts echoed in his ears, their angry yells drowning in the sound of his heartbeat. He burst through the opening to the arena, the sudden cold of the night halting him in his steps. Hiccup pushed away the cold and ran toward the Gronckle's door. He knew that at least one dragon was rideable, and the Gronckle trusted him.

He sat Scarlette down and tried with all of his strength to push open the heavy latch on the door. Hiccup screamed as tears of frustration tore through his eyes. He looked over his shoulder as the Outcast's exited the mountain into the arena and tried again to release the latch, begging it to open.

"You're clever," Alvin growled as he stormed across the arena. "But yer also stupid."

As Alvin got closer, Scarlette began to growl with protective anger. She stationed her small, scarred body in front of Hiccup, the flames rising in her throat. She released a warning blast at Alvin's feet as she snarled, barring her teeth.

"Foolish beast." Alvin grunted as he jumped back from the flames. He pulled his sword from its sheath, glaring angrily at boy and dragon.

Hiccup knew that he didn't have the strength to open the door, so he turned toward the approaching outcasts, his hope slipping away and leaving his knees weak. He watched as Scarlette released another ball of fire, this one landing on Alvin's arm.

The Outcast screamed in rage as the flames tore through his clothes and began licking his flesh. He dropped his sword as he batted at the flames, trying to beat them away as his skin burned. Hiccup moved toward Scarlette, afraid for her as Alvin's rage tore through his lungs.

As soon as the flames were down, Alvin turned toward Hiccup, not carrying that the little dragon was still trying to protect the boy. The other outcasts followed close behind Alvin, becoming a mass of targets that Scarlette didn't have enough fire to defend against. She fired wildly at the Outcasts, hitting a few of them in the leg before running out of flame. Despite her lack of fire she stood before Hiccup, barring her teeth at the Outcasts.

Alvin continued forward, kicking the tiny terror as she lunged toward him. "Out of my way beast!"

"Scarlette!" Hiccup cried, trying to go to her despite his fear of Alvin's rage.

Alvin extended his arm, grabbing Hiccup around the waist and pulling him back with extreme force. "That is the last time you get loose." the outcast snarled as he held the struggling boy.

Scarlette pushed her beaten body back to its feet, ignoring the other outcasts and focusing on Alvin. She lunged at him again, her jaws open and ready to bite. She didn't care that she was small, Hiccup was her friend and she didn't want to see him hurt again.

Hiccup looked down to the dragon, and used what strength he had left to pull himself free from the distracted Outcast, moving toward his discarded sword. It was much heavier than hiccup was used to, but he was determined to do at least one thing right. "Scarlette," he called to the dragon, not wanting Alvin to hurt her again. She stopped running, backing defensively toward hiccup. "Open the door." Hiccup said, his voice shaking. "We're leaving."

Alvin began laughing hysterically, stepping toward Hiccup. "You can barley hold that sword, boy."

"Open it!" Hiccup yelled.

"You aren't leaving." Alvin said sternly as he pulled the dagger from the sheath at his side. "You part isn't over yet."

Vork knelt down beside the trailing chain around Scarlette's neck, grabbing it and pulling harshly. The little dragon yelled as she was choked and pulled away from Hiccup, her jaws snapping and claws flying wildly.

Alvin laughed, seeing the distress on Hiccup's face. "Put the sword down."

Hiccup could feel his hands shaking as the sword fell loudly to the ground, its clatter drowning out everything else. He felt Alvin wrap a large hand around his arm, the cold metal of the dagger at his throat. "You are going to learn to never disobey me." Alvin said hauntingly as he nodded toward Vork.

With helpless, pleading eyes Hiccup watched as Vork lifted the chain, hanging Scarlette above the ground as he pulled out his own blade. "Please," Hiccup begged through tears. "Punish me, but leave her alone."

"This is yer punishment." Alvin said as he gave the final nod.

Hiccup couldn't even scream as he watched Vork's blade cut through Scarlette's small body. He felt the tears falling over his frozen face, his knees finally giving out. Alvin moved the dagger just in time to prevent Hiccup cutting his own throat, though hiccup wished he hadn't. He moved toward her with numb hands, cradling her discarded body as her blood soaked into his clothes. "I'm sorry." He whispered over and over again as he finally felt his will breaking.

Alvin reached down, yanking Hiccup away from the Terror and pushing him toward a waiting Outcast. "Take him to the ship, and make sure he's tied tightly. We leave for Berk tonight."

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\*\*A/N:\*\* This chapter was very hard to write, which is why it took so long. Its a lot longer then I had originally expected, because every time I tried to stop writing, more came. I feel like a lot has happened, and the story is winding in now. I hope you all are still enjoying it, and thank you for being patient through the long time between updates.

## 9. Chapter 9

\*\*Before the chapter starts:\*\*

For those concerned about update times: I work, a lot, and we've had a lot of people quite so I'm working more. I try to update regularly but between work and 'real life' there isn't always a lot of time. There is also only one computer in my home so I don't have as much time to work on writing as I'd like.

I've read some reviews and even gotten some private messages where individuals were angry with the time spent on Mildew's past, and the overall hate of Mildew in general. While mildew isn't meant to be a liked character, especially in this fic, it was important to me at least to give a reason for that hatred he carries. An important part for any tragedy in a person's life is getting over it and letting it go, but the loss of something as important as a child can weigh heavily on an individual, it can make them depressed, or bitter. Mildew loved his son, and the sudden death of his son to the dragon's is for me, what makes him so hateful towards them. So before being cross about that part of the previous chapter, or the idea in general, take a moment and try to look at everything the way Mildew has. If a group was responsible for the death of something so precious to you, and the tribe, or 'family' that you belonged to later treated them as friends, how would you feel? I'm not trying to make Mildew out to be a 'good guy', just making him a bit more human in his reasoning.

Alright, that went on longer than expected, but, I really would appreciate a lack of 'hate' messages going straight to my email. So here's the next chapter, I hope you all enjoy it.

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Stoick was out of bed before the first rays of the morning sun touched Berk. He hadn't slept much that night, and when he did he dreamed of days long since past. Those bittersweet days when Berk and its people were at constant war with the dragons, when they were more Viking than man.

On the wings of memory his dreams had brought his wife back to him, every bit the strong warrior she had been in life. Side by side and swords in hand they fought the beasts, laughing and commanding the loyal people of the Hooligan tribe. Seeing her again as she had been,

Stoick was willing to loose the peace that Berk now knew. To hold her again and feel her heartbeat against his bare chest, to hear her voice...

She had died in battle, the same as Molden, and deep down Stoick didn't blame Mildew for the hatred he had carried. After Valhallarama had died he had held that hate so close that it burnt his soul. If Hiccup had been anyone else's son, he might have been just like Mildew. No... Stoick thought to himself as he walked through the eerily empty house, wanting to be away from the constant reminder of how alone he was. Not like that...

The moment Toothless heard the chief's heavy footsteps he was up, looking around the empty room to the bed where Hiccup used to sleep. He pushed his large body off of the floor, his claws tapping against the floorboards as he walked toward the bed, laying his head upon it. The dragon had known many emotions in his life, but none as painful as the loneliness he felt now. Without his Hiccup there, the sun's warmth didn't touch his black scales. His wings didn't soar over the island, nor the powerful waters of the surrounding ocean. He didn't feel like the mighty Night Fury that everyone once feared.

When the chief didn't come to the room as he had the previous mornings Toothless forced himself away from the empty bed. Down the stairs, through the wide rooms to the open door he went, looking at Stoick with large, hurt eyes. Without their Hiccup, this home was nothing more then a house, haunted by memories of what had once been.

Stoick looked over his shoulder at the dragon, his heart sinking further at Toothless' noticeable pain. In Hiccup's absence he had grown closer to the dragon, he had become the only thing that kept a part of Hiccup here. "C'mon." Stoick offered quietly as he stepped out into the cold morning.

With Toothless by his side Stoick walked through the quiet berk, towards the surrounding forests. He let his mind wander as they walked, His feet knew the way. Yesterday justice had been served, the traitor was dead, and today they would load the ships and set sail for the Outcast island. Stoick knew that he should feel something more then pain, but the sought emotions were lost to him. In his distant gaze he saw his wife and son, more like ghosts then memories and it frightened him. He had lost her, and the thought of loosing hiccup as well...

Stoick stopped walking as his feet touched the stone he had left for Valhallarama, Hiccup's vest still there. He felt his large body slip as he fell to his knees, his large hands balled into shaking fists as the hurt and rage pulsed through him. When she had died, he'd sworn to be as hard as he needed to be to keep Hiccup safe. To be strong and fierce as the Vikings that had come before them and left legends behind. In peace, he had let that protective demeanor slip, he had believed that Hiccup would be okay...

Toothless moved forward, sitting beside Stoick, his eyes on the shredded vest. It was all that remained of Hiccup and it filled him with such hurtful anger. Without flight, he didn't know how to help his human friend and he felt so lost that nothing brought him peace. He felt the pitiful growl vibrate against his throat as he closed his eyes, wishing that his tail was whole. But then I wouldn't know

him...\_ Toothless thought sadly, curving his tail around his body.

"I've failed you." Stoick whispered to the stone, pulling Toothless from his thoughts. "I let Hiccup out of my sight, to be his own person and now he's gone. He'd done such amazing things, I thought he didn't need me to stand over him anymore, didn't need to be protected... I was wrong." Stoick confessed, though it was hard for him to do.

Toothless tilted his head, looking at the Viking chief with understanding eyes. He too had believed that Hiccup was safe, here in his village with the people that he trusted. Though, Toothless didn't believe that Hiccup was weak, he'd proven time and again that he was strong enough. Toothless moved his eyes toward the rising sun, it's light slowly pulling away the night's dark blanket and nudged Stoick's arm.

Stoick followed Toothless' gaze out onto the sea, knowing that the day was closing in. Alvin had wanted a fight, and by Odin he would get one. Stoick stopped his shaking hand, unfurling his fingers and resting one hand upon the stone, and the other in the fur of Hiccup's vest. "I will bring him home." Stoick promised the ghostly memory of his wife.

Toothless' slight purr radiated into a growl as he felt the strengthened anger in the chief's voice. "We will have vengeance." Stoick told the dragon as Toothless allowed Stoick to use him to pull himself to his feet. It wasn't enough to punish the traitor, no, the blood of the master culprit needed to be shed. For every hurt that had befallen his son, he would make sure that Alvin felt worse. And if Hiccup didn't survive, then Alvin would beg for death long before it would be granted.

Turning back toward Berk, Stoick felt his heart pull at his chest. He sighed heavily, letting the quiet tears that he'd held back fall. A viking didn't cry, but here in this one spot, he allowed himself to be a man, a father. He placed his hand on Toothless' shoulder, thankful that the dragon was there and headed back toward Berk. The sorrow gone, he finally felt the fires within himself burning again. He was ready for the fight, for the war that Alvin had started.

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Hiccup felt the sway of the ship as it moved toward home, though he felt no hope. After Vork had killed Scarlette he'd been brought to the ship, practically thrown down the stairs and bound tightly to one of the thick posts holding up the deck. He'd lost feeling in his arms hours ago, but it didn't bother him. In his current state he didn't think he'd be able to feel his body even if it weren't bound so tightly.

His eyes were open, though he didn't see what was happening around him. The only thing he saw was Scarlette's small, lifeless body in his arms, her blood on his clothes. Like the Gronckle, she had died because of him. Alvin and the Outcasts were sailing to Berk, and he knew that there would be war. How many people would die because of him? How many would be hurt by the dragon's he had shown Alvin how to use?

The Outcasts didn't have many dragons, but there weren't many on Berk who really knew how to ride either. His friends, his father... The thought of loosing any of them, even Snotlout, was a heavy burden that threatened to stop his breath. And Astrid... if he lost her... Hiccup tried to push the tormenting thoughts away, but they were all he had.

Among the many footsteps around him, he could hear Alvin's as the large Outcast moved toward him. Hiccup shook his head, clearing the visions away from his sight as Alvin knelt before him, the mocking smile exposing rotting teeth.

"We should be there by noon." Alvin taunted. "Don't get yer hopes up that daddy will save you." He chuckled as he brought his arm forward, picking at the burnt flesh. "That little dragon had some fight in her." He chuckled, seeing the hurt in Hiccup's teary eyes.

Hiccup didn't try to respond. Even without the leather strap in his mouth, he doubted that he'd have the words to express the hate and disgust he felt for what Alvin had done. He turned his eyes away from Alvin, looking at the floor as it swayed. He just wanted all of this to be over, to know peace again.

Annoyed with the lack of attention he was receiving, Alvin hit the boy across the face. Hiccup squeezed his eyes shut against the pain as Alvin's hand landed on the welt from the night before. Despite the pain, he refused to look at Alvin. He couldn't do much, but he wouldn't give any more to the Outcast who had taken so much from him.

"have it yer way." Alvin growled as he pushed himself to his feet. "what do you say to letting yer dad see you like this, to telling him how you helped us?"

Hiccup felt his breath stop as his gut sank. He didn't want his father to see him so broken down, to know that it was his fault that the Outcasts had dragons. He pulled at the fraying rope around his wrists, feeling the burn as the agitated skin was rubbed raw. He hated the muffled sound of his voice as he tried to beg Alvin not to do it.

Alvin laughed, stepping away from Hiccup. "I thought that would get you." He moved toward the stairs, looking over his shoulder at Hiccup. "You really are an embarrassment." He said as he disappeared.

Hiccup couldn't stop the tears from falling as Alvin's words echoed through his mind. His father had spent years being embarrassed by him, and just when he'd started doing things right, this happened. He knew that his father was probably worried about him, but beneath that worry would be disappointment. For letting himself be kidnapped, for betraying his tribe... Stoick would never forgive him. Even if he lived through this, Hiccup didn't know how he would get through the rest of his life with the guilt he felt. The shame he had brought.

Closing his eyes against the world, Hiccup tried to think of better times. Anything to pull him out of his misery and give him hope. But in that self inflicted darkness all he could see were the ghosts of

the people who he had hurt, of the dragons that had died. He could still remember the night he'd shot Toothless down, that moment of pride as he had taken down a Night Fury... He had crippled his best friend that night... When he thought of Toothless the tears started anew. What would Toothless do without him to help him fly? How would the dragon feel without him by his side?

Hiccup didn't know he had fallen asleep until he felt the jolt of the ship as it hit the shore, the excited footfalls of the outcasts echoing within the ship. He'd spent the last few days wishing he was back on Berk, and now that he was, he wished he was anywhere else.

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"Do you think they'll take us with them?" Fishlegs asked as he continued to feed Meatlug.

"Why wouldn't they?" Ruffnut walked around the academy, waiting for Astrid to get back. "They're gonna need us for the big fight."

"They'll need me." Tuffnut boasted. "I'm the most deadly Viking here."

Ruffnut laughed so hard that snot flew out of her nose. "You?"

"Shut up, troll." Tuffnut yelled as he swung at her.

"Butt elf!" Ruffnut retorted, hitting him back.

"Stop it!" Astrid yelled as she and Stormfly entered the academy. She'd barely been gone twenty minutes and the twins were all ready at each others throats. "We are at war, and if we can't get along, then how are we supposed to win against the Outcasts?" She'd been to the village, the ships were being loaded.

"They have to take us too," Ruffnut said, pushing her brother. "We have dragons."

"Yeah," Tuffnut said in a rare moment of agreeance with his sister. "They can't fight without us."

Astrid shook her head, trying to clear her mind. "We can't fight them if we're fighting each other." \_Or ourselves...\_ She thought to herself. She'd spent more time blaming herself for Hiccup's kidnapping than she dared admit. IF she had gone back faster, if she'd followed after those distant screams for help with more speed... It had taken much time, but she'd finally convinced herself that it wasn't her fault.

"We were trained as warriors," Fishlegs said quietly. Despite those years of training, he didn't want to fight. He was afraid, but he didn't want to admit it. "But we're just kids."

"There are only a handful of Dragon riders on Berk, and most of them are us." Astrid replied. "They need us." She looked around the arena, noticing the absence of the most annoying of them. "Where is Snotlout?"

As if he knew they were missing him, Snotlout and Hookfang flew into the arena, out of breath with excitement. "They're here!" He exclaimed nervously.

"Who?" Tuffnut asked.

"The Outcasts!" he blurted out. "I just saw their ships hit shore!"

Astrid studied his face, searching for truth. "Why would they come here?" She asked more to herself than the others. She moved around Stormfly, gently climbing onto her back.

"Where are you going?" Ruffnut asked as she moved closer to her half of the Zippleback.

"To see it for myself, and if they're here, to tell Stoick." No warnings had been sounded, so, if the Outcasts were really there then no one else knew.

Without missing a moment the other viking teens climbed onto their Dragon's and followed Snotlout to the run of shore just outside of view from the village. There were five Outcast ships, each covered in heavily armed warriors and each deck harboring a dragon. Two Gronckles, A Zippleback, a Nadder and a very mean looking Monstrous Nightmare. There was no sign of Hiccup.

After circling the Outcasts ships the teens turned toward the Village, anxious to tell Stoick what they had seen. Stoick was standing with a large group of the other Viking men, giving orders and directing the vikings loading the ships. The men were busy talking to their wives and children for what could be the last time. The teens landed their dragons and raced toward Stoick.

"Stoick!" Astrid called out, nearly tripping over her own feet.

"What's wrong?" Stoick asked, noticing the distress in her voice.

"Alvin and the Outcasts are here!" She blurted out as she stopped to catch her breath. "There are five ships, and they have dragons."

"And Hiccup?" Stoick asked, trying to hide his own worry.

Astrid shook her head. "We didn't see him."

Stoick looked around at the warriors, all of their eyes on him. If Alvin had come to them, then they were up to something, he just didn't know what. "Grab your weapons, we're going to the shore!" Stoick's voice boomed.

As the men began to move Stoick saw the out of place Outcast entering the village. He was sitting atop a Gronckle, a mocking smile on his face. "Stoick?" He called out as he watched everyone turn toward him.

Stoick stepped forward, his own sword already out of its sheath. "You dare come into the village alone?"

The outcast laughed, over confident with the dragon under him. "Alvin doesn't seem too worried. He demands an audience with you, to discuss the terms of your surrender."

Stoick spit on the ground, his anger rising. "There will be no surrender." He snapped, hearing the cries of agreeance from his people.

The Outcast shrugged his heavy shoulders, smiling all the same. "Alvin wants you to come to his ship, to see your boy. Whether you surrender or fight is up to you. You are to go unarmed, and Alvin promises not to attack you while on the ship. You have an hour to decide whether you show up." The outcast finished relaying Alvin's message and nudged the Gronckle with his foot, silently commanding it into the air.

As soon as the Outcast was out of sight the people of Berk surrounded their chief, eager to know what he was going to do. Gobber pushed his way through the crowd, standing next to his old friend and studying the look on his face.

"Do you think its a trap?"

Stoick nodded. Alvin was called treacherous for a reason. "Aye, but there's a chance that its not..." He couldn't deny the need to see Hiccup, to know that he was alive. There was more at stake here then Hiccup's life, the lives of everyone on Berk depended on his actions. "We wont surrender," Stoick said strongly. "But I will accept Alvin's offer."

"He could kill you on the ship." Gobber said as he tightened his hooked hand.

"If he does, then you lead the men. I won't go down there alone, if I don't come back from the ship, then we burn their ships, taking as many of them out as we can. With no escape and their numbers cut it should be easy to defeat them."

Stoick set to work preparing a team of men to accompany him to the shore, most of whom would hide in the trees. If they were given the signal from Gobber, then they would send flaming arrows upon the outcast ships. Other men, all armed would wait on the shore with Gobber as Stoick talked with Alvin. They weren't going to take any chances, nor would they trust the treacherous to keep his word.

Alvin was waiting on the deck of his ship, the twisted grin on his face reflecting the confidence he felt. Behind him stood the deep violet monstrous nightmare, the dragon he'd chosen for himself from the few they had managed to conquer before setting out for berk. He didn't have complete control over the creature just yet, but he had enough to make himself at ease.

He looked down at the shore as Stoick, the night fury, and a handful of men emerged from the trees and laughed. He'd known that Stoick would come. "Ah, Stoick," He chuckled as if they were friends. "come to negotiate surrender?"

Stoick halted the men and shook his head. "Wheres Hiccup." He

demanded coldly. There would be no pleasant words, nor talk of negotiations until he knew that Hiccup was alive.

Alvin gestured to the ramp that had been set against the ship. "Leave yer weapons with yer men, and the dragon. Then you can see him."

Hesitantly, Stoick handed over his sword to Gobber and stepped away from the nervous men. He placed a comforting hand on Toothless' head, knowing by the dragon's low growls how he felt. Stoick looked up at Alvin, his eyes hard as he nodded his head. "It's done."

Alvin laughed and walked toward the ramp, welcoming Stoick aboard the ship. "Right this way." He said as he lead Stoick past the armed Outcasts and down into the ship. "If you try anything, then one of my men will kill him."

Stoick didn't reply. He focused on keeping his features hard as he mentally counted the Outcasts, taking note of their weapons and armor. Alvin was serious this time. He followed Alvin out of sight of his men and into the ship, his nerves racing with the anxiety he tried to hide.

The moment his eyes fell upon his son, Stoick felt his reserve slipping. Any plan to grab Hiccup and run was lost to him as his mind became void of thought and his eyes starred in hidden horror. It was obvious that Alvin had beaten the boy, his face held more than one bruise, and the welt from the leather strap shone bright red.

They had set Hiccup in front of a thick beam near the center of the room, his arms bent behind it and tightly bound. Another rope was wrapped around his chest and abdomen. His ankles and knees were bound as well, fully preventing almost any form of movement. Stoick's eyes moved toward Hiccup's face, the cruel leather strap tied into the boys mouth, and the dried blood beside it. His clothes were covered in blood as well.

Stoick could feel his hands shaking as he clenched his fists, his nails drawing blood from his palms as he tried to control his rage. Without any concern to Alvin, Stoick moved toward Hiccup, kneeling down and unfastening the leather strap. "You're alive." he whispered gratefully.

Hiccup raised his eyes to his father's, trying to hold back the tears. He hadn't wanted Stoick to see him like this, to know. "Dad..."

"Are you hurt?" Stoick asked. The amount of blood on Hiccup's clothes worried him.

Hiccup shook his head, all the while pulling at the ropes around his body. "No." He lied.

Stoick placed a large hand on his son's shoulder, trying to offer him comfort. "I'll get you out of here." He promised.

Hiccup let his face fall toward his chest, tearing his eyes away from Stoick's. "I'm sorry..." He whispered almost too quietly to hear. "It's all my fault."

"times up." Alvin said with mocking care. "You have a choice to make Stoick. Surrender now and take the boy with you, or choose to fight. Berk will be ours, its up to you how many die for it."

Stoick pushed away the Outcasts who tried to move him away from his son, instantly holding himself back as they raised their weapons. He couldn't protect Hiccup from all of them while he was so heavily bound. With a deep, shuddering breath Stoick stepped away from Hiccup, glaring at Alvin. "We won't surrender. And if any more harm comes to him, you will live to regret it fully." He growled.

"You will regret choosing to fight." Alvin snapped back, moving to stand between Stoick and Hiccup. "Now get off of my ship."

Every bit of himself wanted to stay and find a way to take hiccup safely with him. He knew that Alvin was keeping the boy to make him weak, and it was starting to work. To see Hiccup so broken down was devastating to the chief.

Hiccup pulled at the ropes, hating what his predicament was doing to his father. "Dad!" he shouted out desperately as the outcasts tried to lead Stoick away. "Don't worry about me. Don't hold back." He didn't care if he died, he didn't want the deaths of anyone else on his shoulders. "I'll be okay." hiccup promised softly as Vork stepped closer to him, trying to retie the leather strap.

"Get your hands off of him!" Stoick roared, instinctively reaching for his sword and cursing himself for leaving it with Gobber.

"Settle down." Alvin commanded as if talking to a small child. "Don't forget Stoick, here, we have the power." Alvin looked around the ship, to each of his armed Outcasts.

Stoick felt the furious growl rip through his throat as he stepped closer to Alvin, using all of his control to keep from hitting him. "I will kill you." He promised darkly as the Outcasts pushed him up the stairs.

Stoick could feel the deck of the ship shaking under his heavy footfalls as he descended the ramp and rejoined his men. He turned his eyes toward Gobber, seeing his old friends concern and let out a deep breath. "He's alive, for now."

"What happened in there?"

Stoick shook his head, his beard swaying. "They have him trussed up like a wild animal. He couldn't possibly have posed enough of a threat to earn it."

Gobber placed a hand on Stoick's shoulder, looking distastefully at the ships. "War?"

Stoick nodded, trying to clear the blinding hate from his mind. If they wer going to win, then he would need to focus. His people needed him clear minded to lead them into battle. Hiccup needed him calm to save him.

Stoick watched as the men and women of Berk prepared themselves for the war waiting on their shores. Weapons clattered as they were tested, the blades glimmering in the late afternoon sun. On Berk, they had the advantage of knowing the land and having a plentiful stash of necessary resources. As long as they left able warriors around the boarders of the village, then Alvin and his men had no access to additional hostages. Keeping the other children of Berk safe was just as important as defeating the invading Outcasts, and Stoick swore that he wouldn't let anything happen to them.

Despite the busy work of preparing for the attack, Stoick couldn't clear his mind of what he had seen aboard Alvin's ship. The armed men and newly tamed dragons lay far from his thoughts as the memory of seeing his son so broken down replayed itself in a never ending loop. Over the years he'd seen Hiccup upset many times, even near depressed, but broken? Even as small as Hiccup was, Stoick had never imagined seeing him so shattered and distraught.

It was obvious that Alvin had beaten him, the bruises and the hideous welt across his face confirmed it. Stoick couldn't be sure as to the extent of the beatings, and deep within himself, he knew that he didn't want to know. And all of that blood... It couldn't have been Hiccup's, or at least, not his alone.

"What's on your mind?" Gobber asked as he approached Stoick. He hadn't been the same since leaving Alvin's ship.

Stoick shook his head, not wanting to acknowledge his thoughts. "I'm worried about Hiccup." He confessed after long moments of silence. "I've never seen him so broken down."

Gobber hadn't seen the boy himself, but he knew by Stoick's demeanor that it hadn't been good. "Once we get him back he'll be okay." He said comfortingly. "In Alvin's grasp, there isn't any relief. As soon as the Outcasts are defeated though, that'll change."

Stoick nodded, trying to believe Gobber's words. He looked down to Toothless, who hadn't left his side since he'd left Alvin's ship. The dragon's stance was tense as he waited for the fighting to begin, his eyes narrowed and hard. Stoick knew that Toothless was expecting to be by his side during the battle, but he couldn't manage the mechanics of his tail well enough to fight on him. And if anything were to happen to the dragon... Helping Hiccup was going to be hard enough as it was.

"Are the men ready?" Stoick asked, pushing all of his thoughts to the back of his mind.

"Aye." Gobber nodded, following Stoick's gaze over the village. "Just waiting for the command."

Stoick took deliberately slow steps toward the center of the village, his heart heavy. He knew that this battle wasn't just about his son, but about the futures of everyone on Berk. Even knowing that, he still felt as though he was sending his people into battle for his own vengeance. Those dark thoughts needed to be dissolved before the fighting could start, otherwise he wouldn't be able to focus.

If Alvin won, then it wasn't only Hiccup who was lost. The blood of

countless warriors would be spilt upon the land. Women and children would be turned to slaves and killed for the amusement of the Outcasts. There would be no glory in the deaths of those who survived the battle, no peace in the afterlife for their tormented souls.

With a heavy, shuddering breath Stoick pushed his personal vengeance aside, letting it go on the rough breeze sweeping through the village. When he faced Alvin he would let that dark fire burn within him, but until then it was for his home and people that he would fight. Gathering his thoughts into words, he stood before the anxious eyes of the warriors and citizens of Berk, his features determined.

"The Outcasts have made the mistake of bringing the fight to us." His voice rang strongly over the crowd. "Here we have the advantage, and we will defeat them once and for all! Tonight we fight not only for Hiccup, but for our futures, our home. We will not let Berk and its people fall into the hands of Alvin and his men." Stoick waited for the cheers of the people to quiet down before continuing, letting their eager enthusiasm calm his nerves. "The children and any unable to fight will stay in the Great Hall, its walls are strong enough to withstand any initial attack upon it. A legion of men will stay behind and protect the village from any Outcasts that might make it this far. The rest of us will move toward the shores."

"Alvin's men are heavily armed, and they have at least five dragons of their own. We may not be at war with the dragon's anymore, but the dragons they have are our enemies. We know how to fight them, we've spent years protecting Berk from their attacks." He watched the hesitant nods of agreement, knowing how fond the people had become of the dragons. "Hiccup was on Alvin's ship when we were there, but we have no way of knowing if he's been moved. Do not set the ships afire until we know where he is." Stoick's voice was cold as the words left his bearded lips. It was in their nature to burn the enemies means of escape, but until Hiccup was safe he didn't want to see those sails burn.

"What about us?" Astrid said loudly, stepping out from the crowd with the other dragon riding teens. They refused to be left out, hidden behind the Great Halls walls.

Stoick looked into her face, knowing that there was no holding them back. "You and Snotlout are going to the shore with us, the others will help defend the village."

Astrid nodded her head, thankful for Stoick's decision. Within herself she knew that she would have gone to the shore despite orders to stay behind. She wanted to be there, to find Hiccup and bring him home. Snotlout grinned widely, flexing his muscles with pride. The twins shrugged their shoulders, muttering under their breath that they were going to be needed while blaming each other for being left behind. Fishlegs was silently grateful for being aloud to stay behind. He knew that he had the skills to fight, but his worry for Meatlug outweighed his will to fight and see her hurt.

Stoick finished dividing the warriors and turned toward Toothless, his words heavy as he knelt beside the dragon. "I can't take you with me. Without a capable rider, you can't fight this battle. I want you to protect the village. I promise, I'm going to bring him home." It

hurt to see the distress in the dragon's large eyes as he let a low, betrayed growl from his powerful throat. Stoick rested a heavy hand on the dragon's shoulder, trying to relay how he felt to the distraught Dragon. "They need you here, Hiccup needs you alive." He said softly before turning away and mounting Thornado.

He felt the large Thunder Drum rise, his body rocking slightly as they left the ground. Additional weapons had been attached to the saddle at his side alongside shields to protect the dragon's sides from arrows. As soon as Astrid and Snotlout were atop their dragons Stoick gave the command for the men to follow, and they disappeared into the trees.

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It was all Hiccup could do not to cry after Alvin had forced his father to leave. In those few minutes of being so close, all of his remaining hope had flooded through him only to be torn away again. When he'd seen that look in his father's eyes he knew that Stoick had set his mind to rescuing him. That he was going to do everything he could to get him out of Alvin's grasp. The Hooligan tribe was going to war, and Hiccup felt as though all of it was because of him. He didn't want to see any of them dead because he had been weak enough to be subdued by an old man, because he had been kidnapped and used against his people. The guilt was tearing through him on every breath he took.

He could hear the movements of the Outcasts beating against his ears as they put on their clanking armor and talked excitedly of the coming battle. They were overconfident with their newly trained dragons, and Hiccup pitied the beasts. As powerful as they could be, with inexperienced riders they were doomed.

Thinking of these unfortunate dragons, his thoughts turned to Scarlette, who had died to protect him. She was so small, yet she had fought so hard until her death to try and keep his spirits high, to set him free as he had promised her he would do. He had failed her. He closed his eyes, remembering her in the darkness that had held them both prisoner. That lovely shade of scarred green covering her body, those large, determined eyes. On the shaky breath that trembled in his throat as he exhaled he promised to be strong, for her. He wouldn't let Alvin kill him easily, no matter how bound and helpless he was.

His thoughts drifted to Toothless, his heart aching at how much he missed the dragon. His best friend who had been left behind, unable to fly. He couldn't know how Toothless was feeling after these long days, but he was sure that the dragon was hurting just as much as he was. Those sweet winds that had raced with them as they soured over the island were calling out to him, trying to pull him back. The haunting melody of those happy days and the freedom that they had held pulled at his skin, leaving a painful tingling against it.

Hiccup was so lost in his thoughts that he didn't hear Alvin coming, and the sudden appearance of the Outcast startled him. He looked up at the gloating face of his captor with pure hate, hoping that the look conveyed everything he felt and made Alvin at least uncomfortable.

"yer dads a fool thinking he can take us on headfirst." Alvin chuckled, kneeling close to the bound viking teen. "He wont touch the ships as long as he thinks yer on them." He said before pulling out his jagged dagger and cutting the ropes around Hiccup's waist and arms. Alvin roughly pulled the boy away from the beam, retying his wrists and upper arms before throwing Hiccup over his shoulder and heading toward the deck of the ship.

The men had assembled on the decks of each of the ships, waiting eagerly for Alvin's orders. Proudly, the treacherous Outcast stood at the highest point of his ship and pulled Hiccup down from his thick shoulders, setting him on his unstable feet. With his ankles and knees still bound, it was nearly impossible for Hiccup to stand, if not for Alvin's hand tightly grasping his small shoulder he would have fallen.

Alvin looked from ship to ship, seeing the gleaming armor and sparkle of ready weapons. With his free hand he unsheathed his own sword, holding it high for all the Outcasts to see. "Today we fight for a new home!" His voice carried over the distance to every ship, ringing in the ears of all of his men. "Too long we have come for this land and left empty handed, but not today. The power they had is ours now, and we will use it better. These dragons are not our friends, they are weapons! And they will kill every Hooligan that dares raise sword against them."

Alvin listened as the men cheered him on, their yellowed teeth exposed from beneath tangled beards. He felt the smile growing under his own beard as the excitement began to race through him. "The Hooligans have grown weak in their time of peace, and weaker still with their heir in our grasp. Don't let your guards down, and we will defeat them!" He yelled. Alvin looked down at the helpless teen in his grasp, the dark laughter rising in his throat. Stoick should have let this one go, and made a better one. The boy had concurred the dragons, but that was the only good he'd done his tribe, and it had become the instrument of their coming downfall.

Alvin gestured for Vork to step forward and handed Hiccup over to his most trusted Outcast. "Stoick will leave the ships untouched if he believes the boy is on them, but if they get him back then they'll fight harder. I want you to take him to those caves over there," Alvin said, pointing to a group of small openings in the cliff side. "Keep him there, and if it looks like we're loosing, put a knife to his throat and bring him out."

"Understood." Vork grinned, roughly throwing Hiccup over his own shoulder.

Hiccup pulled at the tight ropes restraining him as he was carried away from the ship, shouting angry, muffled words at Alvin. He knew that his father would hold back because of him, and without knowing where he was then the Outcasts retained their means of escape. The cruel trickery was one that Hiccup refused to stand quietly for, though he knew there was little he could do. Vork smacked the side of his head, trying to quiet hm as he was carried across the sandy shore and into the shallow cave. It was deep enough to hide them in shadows, but not to keep them concealed from the right angle.

Hiccup let out a sharp yelp as he was thrown onto the ground, the dust in the disturbed sand filling his nostrils and causing him to

choke. He couldn't move enough to sit himself up, so he laid there, glaring daggers at Vork as the Outcast leaned on his sword and waited. He could hear the Outcasts assembling on the shores, the ground trembling beneath their heavy feet. Hiccup was glad that he couldn't see the field of battle, that at least these deaths wouldn't haunt what dreams he would still live to dream.

His bound hands behind him rested against the sand, his fingers digging miniature graves into the cool earth as he waited for the horns to sound the beginning of the battle. He jumped as he scraped his finger over something sharp, the blood on his hand alerting him to something he couldn't see. Carefully, he moved his hands around the spot until his fingers brushed against the object, his mind racing to discover what it was. He wriggled it in the sand until it was loose enough for him to pull free, carefully exploring it. It felt like an old dagger, though the blade was broken there was still enough left to do some damage.

He felt the relieved sigh escape his gagged mouth as he held the broken weapon clod, trying to readjust his hold on it without Vork noticing. He couldn't cut the ropes from his elbows, nor wrists without risking hurting himself. But if he could break the hold of the ropes on his ankles and knees, then maybe he could get out of here.

**\*\*A/N:\*\*** This chapter is short, but I wanted to lead up to the battle and give the readers something for the wait. I haven't fully outlined how I want to do the fight chapter, so please, bare with me.

11. Chapter 11

The air had ceased to move as the soft breezes quieted and stopped, leaving the ocean an eerily placid surface. The Outcast ships sat almost completely still, their mighty masses shifting ever so slightly under the weight of heavy footsteps. The archers would remain on the ships, shooting their arrows from a safe distance while giving the illusion that they were keeping the Hooligans from rescuing their heir. Alvin, atop the violet Nightmare lead the men down to the shore, where they spread out with weapons ready as they waited for Stoick to lead his men to their deaths.

One of the Gronckles and the Zippleback, along with their riders and a handful of men had been sent around the island to attack the village once the main fight had started. Alvin was sure that Stoick would leave men behind to protect the village, but he wanted what was left of it ready for himself and the men once they had won. The other Gronckle and the Nadder were to remain on the shores with them, each at a far corner of the men, ready to attack. He knew that the dragons were making him over confident, but he refused to let that ease go to his head. The Hooligan's had dragons of their own, and they would fight hard to protect their homes.

Alvin's hand hovered above the hilt of his sword as the sweat dripped down his bearded face. Without a breeze the suns harsh warmth bore down on them without mercy, making them shift uncomfortably in their armor. The Nightmare, which Alvin had taken to calling Bloodletter yawned lazily as its legs stretched out before it. Alvin gripped the

dragon's horns forcing it back upright before he could fall off its back. "Be patient, beast." He commanded quietly as his gaze returned to the trees along the distant shore.

The definition returned to his surroundings when the first sounds of movement filled their ears. Alvin's eyes readjusted under the hazy heat as the foliage moved about, revealing the Hooligan warriors as they came forward. He felt the grin twist over his lips as he closed his hand over the hilt of his sword, ready to pull it out.

Stoick lead the men and women of Berk out from the trees and onto the heated sands, his weight leaned into Thornado and his sword ready. The Outcasts numbers were greater then he'd counted now that they were all off of the ships, but there were still more Hooligans. He immediately noticed the two missing dragons, and he was sure that Alvin had sent them to the village. Let them go... He though with a stern grin. The teens he had left with the other warriors had more control of their dragons then the Outcasts could fathom.

Stoick halted the men and urged Thornado forward a few steps before stopping, staring Alvin down. "Where's Hiccup?"

Alvin laughed. "He's on the ship, surrender now and you can take him with you. Spend a bit of time together before you die."

Stoick shook his head. He knew that the chances of getting Hiccup off of that ship alive were slim, but he refused to surrender his people to death. "There will be no surrender." He said to the cheers of his warriors.

"Have it yer way." Alvin shouted as the Outcasts echoed their own cheers, weapons raised.

Both chiefs held their swords high, their dragons charging across the sand leaving trails of dust in their wake. The first clash of steel ignited the battle, sending warriors of each tribe running against one another. With Spitlout and Gobber to command them, Stoick wasn't too worried about the Hooligan warriors, leaving his focus on Alvin unhindered. Amidst the snapping jaws of their dragons, both men swung their swords with near deadly accuracy. Had they been on their own feet blood would have been spilt.

The clash of weapons echoed over the sands, drifting in and out of angry yells and fierce commands. Wooden shields chipped, littering the shore with splintering shards as every warrior pressed on, determined to win. The arrows from the Outcast ships covered the land in fleeting clouds of shadow as they rained down upon the Hooligan warriors, falling to the ground and imbedding themselves in moving flesh. In the chaos of the fight it was hard to only hit the enemy. The Hooligan archers, hidden in the shade of the forest released their own unlit arrows at the ships, trying to disarm the Outcast archers.

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Atop Stormfly, Astrid flew straight at the Outcast Nadder, her ax ready. Stormfly taunted the other Nadder, quickly disengaging it from its land bound fight and into the sky. Away from fellow Outcast warriors, the Nadder and its rider didn't stand a chance! Astrid kept the Stormfly just to the side of the opposing Nadder, avoiding the

blind spot just in front of her nose and keeping the advantage. The Outcast rider clearly didn't know much about his own Nadder, as he continually tried to keep Astrid right in front of him.

"Yer a coward, girl." He called out as Astrid moved to the side again.

Astrid ignored the insult and patted Stormfly's side, urging her to send forth a large ball of fire. The shot just missed the other Nadder's body, hitting the edge of its wing instead.

The Outcast growled in anger, forcing his Nadder to shoot fire blindly at Stormfly as she avoided the fury of shots with near perfect ease. When His Nadder's fire ran out he pulled his sword from his belt and urged the Dragon forward, his eyes wide with hate.

It was all Astrid could do not to laugh as the Outcast's Nadder moved forward, swaying widely under its impatient rider. She Pushed Stormfly to fly just a bit higher, whispering the command for her Spine shot. Stormfly positioned her tail, and as the Outcast flew into targeting range released the sharp, poisonous shards as him. As Astrid had hoped, the spines hit the Outcast easily, sparing the opposing Nadder. She didn't want to kill the dragon if she didn't have to.

The Outcast fell from the Nadder's back, plummeting towards the shore heavily. The Nadder, seeing its rider gone looked toward Astrid and Stormfly with mixed feelings. It hadn't cared for the cruel, annoying human it had carried.

"Go." Astrid called to it, hoping that it would leave. It started forward, releasing a low roar towards Stormfly who answered with a more ferocious growl. The Nadder didn't look back to its former rider as it took off, leaving the Outcasts behind in its want to live.

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The injured arm from Scarlette's fire pulled at Alvin's thoughts as he continually avoided Stoick's sword. He could feel the newly scaring burns opening, the blood and pus leaking out from the thick leather armor over his arms. Trying to keep the injury far from his thoughts, Alvin swung harder, in quickened slashes at the Hooligan chief.

Stoick took quick notice of the covered injury on Alvin's arm, focusing the majority of his attacks on the wounded arm. "It was a cowardly move, taking Hiccup." he growled, avoiding Alvin's sword as it swiped near his face.

"You should have killed the little embarrassment early. He's weak." Alvin snarled as he raised his shield against a slash to his gut.

The words enraged Stoick, causing him to fight harder. In the early days, Hiccup had seemed like an embarrassment, but he had proven himself not only to Stoick, but to the tribe. Through his deeds he had shown them how strong he was. "He sin't weak." Stoick yelled as he swung again, his blade cutting through the tangled hairs of Alvin's beard.

Alvin felt the rage building as the hairs fell, leaving his once proud beard a mutilated mess. His anger only grew as his eyes caught sight of the Nadder's rider falling dead to the shore.

Seeing that rider fall, Stoick felt unmeasurable pride in Astrid and her abilities as a warrior. "Having Dragons doesn't give you the ability to command them." He taunted, seeing the red cover Alvin's face. "Flaunting power only shows how weak you really are!"

"You haven't seen our full power!" Alvin laughed hysterically, letting his anger control his weapon.

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Snotlout felt nothing more than shame for the fidgeting rider on the Gronckle. Compared to the Outcast, even Fishlegs looked like a heroic warrior on Meatlug! Though, in his mind no dragon could match Hookfang, even on the dragon's most disagreeable days.

Snotlout charged toward the Outcast, Hookfang's jaws exposed and his long talons swiping dangerously. The serpentine movements of the Monstrous Nightmare left the Gronckle defensive and its rider confused as he tried to keep track to where the attacks were coming from. The Gronckle, ignoring its rider swung its heavily armored tail defensively at Hookfang, hitting him across the snout and leaving him dazed for only a moment before the Nightmare's eyes narrow in fury.

Feeling confident in the Gronckle's ability to defend them both, the rider pulled his spiked club out and waited for Snotlout to move in closer again. The Gronckle snarled a warning at Hookfang as he stepped closer, building the fire deep within its throat.

Hookfang felt his own fire igniting, and was the first to release. The Gronckle's heavily armored skin spared it the full pain of the blast as it counter fired and stepped back, ready to swing it's tail again. The Nightmare shook off the heat of the flames, igniting his entire body in his fury. Snotlout had never been happier for the saddle, its thick leather warm, but sparing him his dragon's flames.

The Outcast rider's eyes widened as he watched the nightmare drive forward, teeth snapping angrily at the Gronckle in retaliation for the blow. Hookfang closed his jaws over the top of the Gronckle's tail, biting through the thick skin before the end of its tail hit him across the face again.

The Outcast raised his club, fully intending to smash it over Hookfang's head when a small knife flew through the air, imbedding itself in his arm. Snotlout turned toward the direction the knife had come, seeing his father watching eagerly.

Snotlout grinned, determined to make his father proud and had Hookfang pull back, only to move forward with harsh anger, his jaws sinking into the Gronckle's neck and puncturing its throat. The Gronckle roared in agony as it tried to pull away, slowly weakening as it sank into the bloodied sands.

Snotlout took advantage of the Outcasts dismay and pulled out his own

sword, pushing Hookfang into the dying Gronckle and swinging with all of his strength at the Rider, cutting through his thin armor and into his chest. His first kill in battle, and all ready the Hooligan teen could feel the thrill of actual battle running through his veins. His took only a brief moment to look towards his father, seeing the proud smile on his face.

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Hiccup winced as the broken blade cut through the bindings around his ankles and into his palm. He stopped moving, watching Vork carefully to see if the Outcast had noticed him sawing through the straps, but Vork was too focused on the battle just outside of Hiccup's view. He sighed heavily through the leather gag, ignoring the stinging pain in his hand and readjusting his hold on the dirty handle. He knew that he couldn't reach the straps on his wrists and forearms, but if he could just get his legs free, then maybe he could get past Vork and let his father know where he was.

It was a long shot, but it was the only hope he had right now. Hiccup grasped the now slippery, gritty handle of the blade and carefully went to work on cutting the straps around his knees, the sounds of the battle echoing against the walls of the shallow cave. Weapons clashed and warriors yelled as unseen blows landed. For now, Hiccup willed the guilt of what was happening outside his sight away. He wouldn't let Scarlette's sacrifice be in vain, he refused to just lay there a helpless prisoner.

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They heard the disgruntled growls of the dragons before they saw them. Approaching from the opposite end of the island, two Outcasts with heavy swords rode toward Berk on their dragons, accompanied by a handful of men on foot.

The warriors who had been left within the village had been growing tense in the extended boredom, listening to the distant echos of the battle on their shores. Their hands itched to hold their weapons, to feel the thrill of battle as it pumped adrenaline through their veins. They were almost relieved when they heard the dragons, following the sounds to the growing figures in the distance.

The Hooligans lifted their shields and held their weapons tightly, waiting for the Outcasts to make the mistake of attacking first. Their riders came in first, flying wildly and setting fire to the first homes in their path, hoping to incite a panic. The Zippelback Riders had trouble getting the heads of the dragon to cooperate, so the Gronckle did most of the work.

Fishlegs was relieved to see the enemy Gronckle waste its shots on the empty houses. Years of Warrior training left his mind as he gulped down the anxiety rising within himself. The Outcast Gronckle was bigger than Meatlug, a ferocious beast with a cruel rider feeding into its animalistic nature. He knew that he had a duty to his tribe, but he didn't want to see his dragon, his friend, hurt in the fight.

Despite his own fear, he could feel Meatlug's body vibrating as the protective growls erupted from her throat. She was ready for this, and was confident enough for the both of them. Luckily, the heavy

Gronckle's rider had landed the dragon, its small wings tired from the long flight. Fishlegs pulled up his shield and charged forward, feeling the heat of Meatlug's own fire radiating from her throat.

Meatlug released the lava blast, the fire landing at the opposing Gronckle's feet. The large Dragon stepped back, rearing its head as it released its last blast back at Meatlug. The weakened blast landed a few feet short of Meatlug and Fishlegs, setting fire to the patch of grass. The flames quickly burnt through the dry grass, leaving a smoldering patch of crisp brown behind.

Fishlegs continued forward, the adrenaline slowly consuming his fear and turning it to a hungry rage. His eyes lit up as if on fire themselves as his own sword collided with the Outcasts, blocking a hit meant for Meatlug. The larger Gronckle swung its tail, knocking Meatlug back a few paces as Fishlegs readjusted himself and charged forward again, her own tail ready to swing and her jaws stretched wide as the roar bellowed across the village.

Being smaller, Meatlug avoided the other Gronckle's tail and bashed herself into the Gronckle, knocking the Outcast rider to the ground. The Outcast's voice spat obscenities at his own dragon, the Hooligan teen as he pushed himself to his feet and picked up his sword. Meatlug turned toward the Outcast, the drool dripping between her long teeth as the fire grew within her. Fishlegs patted the side of her head, jumping down with his shield held against his body and sword raised. He'd never felt so eager to fight, so bound to his sword!

The fight was over before his eyes could focus on the movements of his sword, the Outcast dead before his feet. The feel of blood on his hands brought Fishlegs back to himself, the thirst for battle temporarily quenched. He turned his eyes to the Gronckle, its star baring down into him.

The Gronckle watched as the smaller human cut down his cruel rider, freeing him from its command. Though bigger, this human was much like the one that had approached him back on its island home. Its own Gronckle was loyal to it, threatening him should any harm come to her human. He didn't know what had happened to the small human who had calmed him, but he knew that he would not harm this one, who reminded him of the boy. Offering a brief nod, the Gronckle turned away from the viking and Dragon, pushing itself off of the land and moving toward home.

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The twins laughed as they sat on the separate heads of their Dragon, watching the Outcasts struggle to control their own. It weaved from side to side, each head trying to go in separate directions as the Outcasts yelled orders at it.

"Lets show him how its done." Ruffnut chuckled.

"They're gonna regret messing with us." Tuffnut grinned, agreeing with his sister.

In near perfect unison the twins lifted off, flying with learned ease toward the bumbling Outcasts. Their laughter was laced with mockery

as they flew once around the Outcasts, taunting them. Barf and Belch, having learned their riders humor joined in the mockery as the other Zippleback groaned its annoyance at the incompetence of the Outcasts atop its necks.

The twins brought their dragon around to the front of the Outcasts, staring them down as they pulled their own weapons out from the sheathes at their sides, waiting to see what the enemy would do first.

"They're like kids" Ruffnut said, flicking her hair away from her face.

"Smelly, deformed ones." Tuffnut added. "This is gonna be easy."

The larger of the Outcasts pulled his sword from his belt, grunting dis-pleasurably as he shifted to avoid falling. "We'll have yer guts for belts!"

"You have to catch us first." Ruffnut laughed as they pushed up, gliding into the open skies.

Once above the slowly following Outcasts the twins each signaled their individual heads, starting the gas and spark of their first fiery attack. The fire ball hit the enemy Zippleback, knocking it back and causing the Outcasts to drop their weapons in a desperate attempt to keep from falling. They cursed loudly as they pressed their dragon forward, embarrassed by the ease at which the teens were up showing them.

Again the teens urged their dragon into the process of gas and spark, sending another fire ball straight into the Outcast's dragon. Working together, they were unstoppable to the Outcasts still set on individually controlling each head. The Outcast Zippleback, aggravated by the continuous attacks against it mimicked its riders bickering, fully ignoring the Hooligan teens and snapping at its own heads.

The Outcasts began yelling at their dragon, hitting each of its heads with armored hands in the attempt to get it focused and attacking. The dragon turned on its riders, hissing angrily and jolting its long body, loosening the Outcasts hold and throwing them to the distant ground before flying off to nurse its wounds.

Tuffnut watched the Outcasts fall, turning toward his sister with a disappointed smirk. "That was too easy."

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The Hooligan warriors were quick to split into two teams: One to fight the Outcast invaders, another to put out the fires caused by the dragons. Men and women rushed in every direction, swords clashing against shields and buckets splashing water onto the ground. For every warrior put to the task of diminishing the flames, another stayed close, protecting them from the Outcast blades. It was only after the dragon riders were defeated that the Outcast fighters began to loose spirit and attempt to retreat, only to be stopped by the Hooligans set on protecting their home.

Blood fell, soaking into the dirt roads of the village as Outcast and

Hooligan alike fell under the blade. The fires were out, but the damage had been done to the homes and building which it had ravished, leaving charred shadows behind. When the last Outcast fell the Hooligans raised their voices in a roaring cheer, their weapons raised to the skies. Their brethren had died in glorious battle, and it was not yet time to mourn the loss, not until the true fight was over and the pyres sent their souls away.

The twins and Fishlegs turned their dragons toward the shores, ready to assist in the larger battle raging beyond their sight. Toothless watched as the teens flew toward the shores, his eyes following their shrinking forms until they disappeared. He couldn't stand to be left behind any longer, not when Hiccup and the others needed him. Without another moments hesitation Toothless pushed himself forward, his sleek body moving with impressive speed as he ran through the familiar forests of Berk. When Hiccup had been taken there had been nothing he could do, unable to fly after him and bring him home. The pain that that knowledge had filled him with had been almost unbearable. Now Hiccup was here, on the shores waiting for help and he couldn't obey the Chief's command to stay back. If he died, then at least he did so to save his friend.

Through the trees and over the fallen branches, Toothless pressed forward, his heartbeat drumming against his ears. Between each rapid beat he could hear the sounds of fighting growing louder, the scents of blood and sweat thickening. Toothless stopped at the edge of the trees, looking over the shores with desperate eyes for Hiccup. Amidst the colliding warriors he couldn't see his human, nor did he catch scent of him in the chaos. His ears picked up on a voice he did know, and turning his head he saw Stoick, still atop Thornado and facing Alvin. Just the sight of the treacherous filled Toothless with a rage he hadn't felt in a very long time.

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Stoick grinned as his blade caught Alvin's arm, cutting deeply into the sweaty flesh. The Outcast yelled in frustrated anger, pulling his arm back and lifting his shield against the following attack. Beneath him, Bloodletter was growing annoyed with the persistent swipes from Thornado.

"On the ground, you wouldn't stand a chance." Alvin growled, issuing the challenge.

"You're loosing." Stoick countered.

Alvin snickered, shifting on his dragons back. "I will win this battle Stoick. My men aren't the only ones dying on this field. Your men will grow tired, and in their attempts to make it back to the village we'll pick them off, one by one."

"The battle will be over long before my men seek rest." Stoick snapped, pressing forward.

Alvin nudged Bloodletter down, avoiding Stoick's attack and bashing into Thornado, knocking the Hooligan chief to the ground. Alvin's laughter rang out as his dragon stepped forward, hovering over Stoick. "On the ground, I hold the advantage." Alvin laughed, raising his sword for a final blow.

In a blur of black scales Toothless leapt forward, headbutting the Nightmare and shaking Alvin's sword from his grasp. Stoick turned toward Toothless, the relief and appreciation clear on his face as he pushed himself to his feet. His own sword extended, he stared down at Alvin with hard eyes.

"This is your last chance Alvin, give me back my son." Stoick declared harshly.

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Seeing his leader on the ground, Vork turned toward Hiccup with narrowed eyes. "What..?" He muttered, seeing the cut straps in the dark sand.

Hiccup tucked the broken blade into his belt as he looked up at his confused captor, trying to back away as Vork stepped towards him. With little effort Vork pulled the teen to his feet and pressed his blade against his throat. "Time for yer grand appearance." the Outcast whispered loudly as he marched Hiccup out into the harsh sunlight.

Looking over his shoulder, Alvin smiled, a haunting cackle leaving his throat. "Its not over yet, Stoick."

Stoick followed Alvin;s gaze, his blood boiling as his body froze. There, with a blade inches away from taking his life was Hiccup. He hadn't been on the ships after all... Stoick took a hesitant step back, listening to the fierce roar as Toothless stepped beside him. Neither of them took their eyes off of Vork as he moved Hiccup closer.

"Call down yer men, or the boy dies." Alvin demanded as he pulled himself to his feet.

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\*\*A/N: \*\*This chapter came out longer then expected, 8 pages! This is the first battle I've written so hopefully its as good as I think it is. I'm pretty proud of it. ;)

If the Outcast riders seemed destined to fail, it is because realistically, they have no real dragon riding experience. Being able to climb on doesn't give one the ability and trust to really command a dragon. So that's why it might have seemed too easy for them to be defeated.

In regards to Fishlegs: In the books, Fishlegs is a berserker, And in the show and movie he is rather soft spoken and seemingly timid. I tapped into a bit of the book version because otherwise, I didn't know how he would do in a fight.

## 12. Chapter 12

The sun shone against the blade, the lights reflection dancing across the stained sand. With a cruel smile on his bearded face, Vork marched Hiccup forward, his hands steady. With the encouraging nod from Alvin, Vork continued even closer, his eyes scanning the shore for any Hooligan who might try to come at hm.

Hiccup couldn't look at his father, couldn't bare to see the distress on his usually confident face. That pain had been caused by him, the blood on these sands was on his hands. Looking over the shore, it wasn't just the bodies of the Outcasts that lay dead, but those of his tribe. The sun's warmth had never felt so cold as it did in those moments as his skin crawled. Though he could feel the sadness growing within himself, he refused to let the tears fall. He wouldn't bring anymore pain to his father's eyes.

"Call yer men down, Stoick." Alvin growled, raising his hand. He knew by the pain in Stoick's eyes that he had won, that the battle was over.

Vork stopped walking, pressing the blade closer against Hiccup's throat, drawing a thin line of blood. He felt the teen shudder at the sting, saw the father withhold the anger. He knew that hehad done his leader proud, that the battle, and Berk, was in their hands.

Stoick raised his own hand to his warriors, watching with anxious eyes as their leader called to them to stop. They could hear the distress in his mighty voice as his eyes never left his son. When Hiccup had been out of sight, at least Stoick had had the illusion that he was safe, now, all he had was the sight of him being used against his people. His grip tightened on his sword, his knuckles glowing white as the rage coursed through his entire body.

"Let the boy go, Alvin." Stoick spit the Outcast's name. It took everything he had to refrain from charging at the Outcast and killing him. Keeping toothless at bay was nearly as hard. The Dragon growled, his fury building as he shifted his stance. In a moments notice he would be ready to pounce, to rip apart Alvin and his dragon. The dragon was small, but he was the strongest on Berk, and that strength had been forged in friendship, something that Alvin would never have.

Alvin laughed, stepping beside Bloodletter as stroking his horns. "The boy makes you weak. You could have killed me a moment ago, won the war and saved your Tribe. The little embarrassment will cost you everything." Alvin said darkly.

"I have more strength then you will ever have." Stoick growled. "Hiccup has never made us weak, he has given us peace. Where you see embarrassment, we found strength." Stoick's words rang out as he stepped toward Alvin, ever watchful of the blade at his son's throat.

Hearing those words soar on his father's voice rose a new hope in Hiccup. He could do nothing for those who had died, but if he chose the right actions, then he might save those who remained. It would be foolish to believe that his father could save him on his own, even a man as strong as Stoick could not fight this battle alone. His father and dragon were close, they were strong, but the blade at his throat was closer. No, if he wanted to help, if he wanted to get out of this alive, then he would have to do something to aide them.

"What'll it be Stoick?" Alvin asked, raising his sword. "Fight and watch the boy die, or surrender and let him live one more day?"

Stoick could see Astrid slowly gliding closer, hidden in the cover of the trees. If Alvin saw her then all was lost. He lowered his sword, keeping it ready and looked the Outcast in the eyes. "Hooligan's never surrender. If we lose this battle, then another will be born. Berk will never belong to cowards like you."

"So you sentence yer son to death?" Alvin laughed as he climbed upon Bloodletter's back. "Look at him Stoick, is yer precious son so easy to throw away?"

Hiccup caught his father's eyes, carefully nodding his head as he tried to assure him that he would be okay. He'd seen Astrid in the trees, and he knew that the moment to act was close. Moving his bound hands slowly to avoid Vork's attention, he wrapped his hands around the hilt of the broken blade and pulled it out from his belt, waiting for the time to strike. He looked again to Astrid, seeing her raise her ax and take aim.

"Get ready," Stoick whispered to Toothless as he watched Astrid aim her ax. The girl was a magnificent shot, and he had no doubt that she would hit Alvin so long as he didn't know that she was there. All of their heads turned as the roar of the twin's dragon spread over the field, signaling the chaos that was about to start.

Astrid watched the scene from her hiding place in the trees, her eyes wavering as she tried to look away from Hiccup. It had been days since she had seen him, and she could see the changes beyond the physical damage. There was distress in the way he stood, and a dwelling pain in his gaze. She couldn't imagine what had happened to him while in Alvin's clutches, where all of the blood on his clothes had come from. The sun sparked off of the blade hidden behind his back, telling her that he would be okay if she made her move. She looked up at the Zippelback roared and knew her only chance was now! In mere moments the others would be here, and in that chaos they risked loosing Hiccup forever. Sighing heavily, Astrid put all of her hope into her aim as she prepared to throw the ax.

"Choose Stoick!" Alvin demanded impatiently as the other dragons drew closer.

Stoick glanced at Hiccup, seeing the reassuring nod as the glimmering silver of the ax caught his vision. "Hooligans!" His voice bellowed loudly. "We fight!"

Hiccup felt Vork's arm moving to cut his throat and he pressed himself back and ducked, thrusting the jagged edge of the blade into Vork's thigh. He heard the Outcasts scream shatter in his ears as he moved away, trying to outrun his angrily grasping arms.

The ax flew through the air, the perfectly balanced weapon spinning as it moved toward its target. Alvin moved an instant too soon, but the blade still found him, embedding itself in the arm that held his sword. The enraged howl ripped through his lungs as the hate burnt in his eyes. Without hesitation he ripped the ax from his arm, ignoring the blood that splattered against the sand.

"You will regret this!" He shouted, kicking Bloodletter's side and urging the dragon into flight. "Kill them all!" He commanded the Outcasts already clashing weapons with the Hooligans.

Toothless charged forward, snapping his jaws shut on Bloodletter's leg and holding the dragon in place. He tore at the violet flesh between his teeth, tasting the blood as it seeped between his teeth. In rage, the Nightmare set itself afire, growling as Toothless backed away with a chunk of his leg in his mouth. Alvin hit the dragon as the flames began to scorch his leather armor, the heat against his skin almost unbearable. Again he commanded the dragon to fly, his target in his sight.

Astrid urged Stormfly forward, racing over the shore to try and help Hiccup. Vork was chasing after him in fury, and Hiccup's balance was thrown off by the bindings on his arms. She could hear her heartbeat thundering against her ears as her anxiety rose. Stormfly was fast, but Vork was so close to him...

Seeing where Alvin's sight had fallen, Stoick ran toward Hiccup. The Outcast was catching up to him fast, leaving a trail of blood as the murderous intent burnt in his eyes. He felt his heart skip a beat as Hiccup tripped over his feet, falling against the sand. As he watched Hiccup struggle to move away he pressed himself harder, forcing himself to run faster than he ever had. \_Odin, don't let him die.\_ He begged as he ran.

Seeing the boy on the ground Alvin dove Bloodletter forward, ordering the dragon to open his claws. Unable to move, he was an easy target, and if Alvin couldn't have Berk, then Stoick wouldn't have his son. Stoick was only a few feet away when Bloodletter descended upon the boy, grabbing him in his long claws and lifting him off of the ground. Stoick swung his sword as his labored breaths prevented the frustrated roar from leaving his throat. He'd just missed hitting the dragon's leg.

"Say goodbye to yer son Stoick." Alvin snarled. "He dies today!" Alvin turned Bloodletter around, soaring towards the highest cliff near the shore.

Toothless skidded to a stop beside Stoick, the ball of fire leaving his throat as he roared in unadulterated rage. Without a moments hesitation Stoick climbed onto the Night fury's back, glad that he hadn't removed the larger pedal from the saddle. In mere seconds they were off the ground, following after Alvin with a speed the nightmare couldn't outrun.

The twins laughed as they set fire to the Outcast ships, watching as the burning warriors jumped into the sea to put out the flames tearing through their armor. On the shores, the Hooligan warriors waited to relieve them of the brief suffering. Climbing flames reflected on the waters as the blood spread out, diluting and disappearing on the waves created by warriors fighting to live.

Like dragons, the men fought with an inhuman ferocity. They set aside their fears and held onto the fires burning within themselves as they pressed on, determined to protect their homes, and their lives. When they had watched their leaders fight, they had seen the dragonesque shadows upon the sands, snarling and swiping as each tried to conquer the other. Each faction had fallen into the power their leaders had displayed, taking from it and using it. On this field today, they were not merely men, but the embodiment of the beasts that had been their greatest enemies for long. In taking up their weapons and pushing their fears aside, they had concurred the dragons within

themselves, riding them on every swing and collision. Outcast or Hooligan, the beasts had been unleashed, and every warrior would fight until they had won or died.

Seeing Stoick getting closer, Alvin turned Bloodletter down to the cliff where they landed roughly. He kicked the angry dragon, forcing him to release the gasping boy before Stoick could attack. Alvin grabbed Hiccup by the shoulder and held him against himself, pulling his dagger from his belt and holding it against the small cut Vork had made.

Stoick stopped Toothless from releasing the fire he'd been ready to shoot, carefully landing him mere feet away from the cornered Outcast. He jumped off from Toothless' back, his sword held tightly in his hands.

"You've lost Alvin, let him go." Stoick demanded as he stepped forward.

Alvin took a step back, glancing at the steep fall that lay a few steps away. "I wont die alone." He grinned, pressing the blade harder against Hiccup's throat and bringing forth a helpless whimper.

"I'll kill you." Stoick spat, raising his sword. This had gone on long enough, and after surviving so much, he wouldn't let Hiccup die now.

"Not before I kill him." Alvin laughed as he turned to his side, pushing his hostage over the cliffs edge.

"Hiccup!" Stoick yelled as he rushed forward, seeing his son disappear over the edge. As quickly as Hiccup had vanished from sight Toothless had rushed past Stoick, diving after the boy! Stoick turned toward Alvin, his fists clenched as he threw the powerful hit against the Outcast's face.

Alvin fell to the ground, the grin never leaving his lips. "You loose." He said as he spit blood at Stoick's feet.

Stoick hit Alvin again, breaking his nose leaving the Outcast unconscious as he leaned over the edge, watching helplessly as Hiccup continued to fall toward the ocean. "Save him," He begged as he watched Toothless follow.

Toothless closed his wings against his body, feeling himself fall faster. Hiccup was falling faster still, but if he could get him out of the water in time... He remembered the day they had fought the Red Death, when Hiccup had dove into the water to try and save him while he was bound and unable to free himself. Now, he would do the same for Hiccup. He wouldn't let him die, not now.

Astrid pressed forward, the tears blurring her vision as she watched Hiccup fall. \_Not like this, not now! Her mind screamed as she silently begged Stormfly to fly faster, pushing the dragon to her limits in a desperate attempt to catch Hiccup.

He felt himself falling, the wind whistling in his ears as its unseen arms tore at his body. In vain he pulled at the bindings on his arms, trying to will them to loosen and fall away. Like this, He couldn't swim, he'd drown! He could see the tears following him down as

Toothless got slowly closer, the look of desperation in the dragon's eyes was heartbreaking.

Hiccup managed to turn his body enough to keep his body from suffering the full hit of the water as he broke the surface, the air he'd tried to hold leaving his lungs. He could feel the sudden cold embraceing him tightly as it whisked away what little air he had, becoming him into sweet oblivion. It promised an escape from all of the pain on his body, in his mind. Hiccup wanted that release, to finally feel at peace again. Hiccup stopped struggling, feeling his body fall further into the murky darkness as his eyelids became heavy. He'd barely seen the vast splash of Toothless' body as he hit the water before fading into unconsciousness.

### 13. Chapter 13

Hiccup felt the cold hands of the water clawing at him, numbing his body to every pain he had felt over the last few days. The deeper into the darkness that he fell, the more he was ready to accept an end. He had done his best, and it had never been enough. When he had tried to hold out, the innocent had died. When he had had the courage to fight back he was never the only one to be punished. To feel nothing was such a relief that it didn't seem wrong to be so selfish. He knew that letting go would only lead to more pain for those around him, but after so much hurt, he just wanted to be okay again.

Hiccup could hear his lungs screaming at him to take in air as they burnt against the cold that was closing in. Salted water slipped through his parted teeth as the leather strap kept him from closing his chapped lips. Just let me rest... He begged as his mind became numb to thought.

Toothless hit the water, unfolding his wings as he pushed through the cold toward Hiccup's falling body. Swimming as fast as his body would allow, he followed Hiccup into the murky waters, towards the sandy bottom of the ocean. He wouldn't loose Hiccup, not yet! The water wasn't too deep here, they were close enough to the shore that Hiccup didn't have far to fall, but far enough that he hadn't been hurt. Toothless stopped near Hiccup's body, frantically nudging the boy for any sort of response. Carefully, Toothless closed his teeth over Hiccup's sleeve and began to pull the unconscious boy towards the surface.

Stoick stood on the shore next to Thornado and Astrid, watching the unmoving waters for any sign of Hiccup and Toothless. Spitlout had gone to retrieve Alvin, who was to be locked away until his execution. The air had never felt so heavy, nor breathing so strenuous as in those moments of endless waiting. The sounds of his worried heart beat against his chest, spreading the pain that fear brought.

"Hiccup!" Stoick yelled despite himself as Toothless broke the surface, Hiccup with him. Thank Odin for that Dragon... He thought as he rushed toward the Dragon, pulling his son into his arms and taking him back to dryer land. Carefully he set Hiccup upon the sand, pulling the dagger from his belt and cutting away the straps binding his arms. Stoick cut away the roughly bitten strap from hiccup's mouth before pressing his ear to the boys chest. His hands moved on their own. Pressing down repeatedly as he tried to get Hiccup to

breath.

Astrid felt Toothless beside her, as much as she wanted to comfort the dragon she couldn't look away. Silently, the tears fell over her cheeks as she waited, hoping desperately that this wasn't the end.\_ Not like this, it can't end like this.\_ She told herself over and over again. To be so close to him and still loose him would be too much.

\_Stop being so stubborn... \_Stoick pleaded as he continued to try and bring Hiccup back. He could feel the frustrated anger building, causing him to press harder, to push more frequently. He could feel the tears he didn't want to shed burning behind his eyes as his heart sank. He refused to give up, no matter what his mind was calling truth.

The tears broke free as Hiccup's body convulsed, the trapped water spilling from between pale lips. He stared down into Hiccup's dazed green eyes and pulled his son close, his own body shaking with relief. "I thought I'd lost you." Stoick whispered.

Hiccup couldn't say anything as he wrapped his arms around his father, his own tears hidden in his father's chest. It was over, after enduring so much he was finally home. His voice remained hidden as he let the hurt go with every tear, feeling the bittersweet relief as if washed over him. The warm air turned cold as the breeze rushed over his soaked body, leaving him shivering in his father's arms.

"Are you okay, son?" Stoick asked, hesitantly pulling away from the boy.

Hiccup nodded his head, the action betraying his feelings as he looked back at his father. Within moments Toothless was at his side, playfully pushing him before resting his head on Hiccup's shoulder. Hiccup immediately wrapped his arms around the dragon's neck, pressing his face against the warm black scales. "Thank you." he whispered, his voice breaking.

Toothless softly nudged Hiccup's face, giving a soft grunt in reply. He didn't think Hiccup would ever know just how lost he'd been without him, how lost the village had been. Toothless wrapped his tail around himself and Hiccup, letting the boy feel safe as he continued to let the pain go. He could smell the old dragons blood on Hiccup's clothes, the thick scent masking the traces of the boys own blood.

Toothless turned his narrowed eyes toward the Hooligan warriors, watching them finish off the remaining Outcasts as Alvin was lead away. He repressed the enraged growl burning in his throat, his every instinct told him to kill the treacherous. Toothless tore his eyes away to look at Stoick, who had been watching the same as he, this kill wasn't his to make. It belonged to Hiccup's father, but he would be there, and he would make Alvin suffer for what he had done.

Astrid couldn't hold back her own silent tears as she stood aside and watched Hiccup, burrowed into Toothless' side, his body shaking as he cried. To see him so broken down, it was tearing her apart. She took careful steps forward, aware of how protective the Night Fury was at

the moment and held her hand out to the dragon. She waited until Toothless met her gaze, nodding his head and unwrapping his tail.

Kneeling beside Hiccup, she set a comforting hand on his shoulder and waited for him to be ready. It only took him a moment to realize that she was there and fall into her open arms. He wasn't crying anymore, but he was still trembling as the shock of the past few days wore through him. Wrapping her arms around him, she leaned in closer, resting her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.

"I'm sorry." She whispered.

Hiccup pulled away, looking into her teary blue eyes. "For what?" He asked, voice hoarse.

Astrid shook her head, fighting back the sobs building in her throat. "If I'd have gotten back sooner, then none of this would have happened." She confessed. She'd blamed herself every waking minute since he'd been taken. "I should have-"

"No." Hiccup said, cutting her off. He couldn't stand to see her blame herself. "If you'd have been there, and something would have happened to you..." He shook his head. "Then I would have let Alvin kill me. It wasn't your fault." He assured her before pulling her close against himself. He'd missed her so much, her smile, her strength...

Stoick looked down to his son, seeing him there, hurt as he was, yet alive was the most relieving sight of his life. The late day sun shone down on the dragon and teens, merging their shadows as they sat there together. Stoick didn't know what had happened to Hiccup, but it had taken great strength to conquer those trails and come home alive. The boy was every bit as stubborn and strong as the dragons he had tamed. Stoick turned his eyes to the sky, closing them. "Thank you." he whispered to Valhallarama.

Gobber was walking across the bloodied sands, his eyes on his former apprentice. It was good to see the boy home, and he couldn't hide the grin on his face. As joyous as the moment was however, there were more serious matters at hand.

"Stoick?" He stepped toward the chief.

Stoick turned toward Gobber, his voice temporarily lost to him.

"The Outcasts are dead." Gobber confirmed what Stoick had watched in passing. "Fifteen of our own have departed."

Stoick nodded solemnly, he had expected casualties, but it was never easy to send them off. "We build the pyres tonight, tomorrow we send them to Valhalla." But before that, Alvin would be dealt with.

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\*\*A/N: \*\*I know this chapter is short, but things are a bit, busy. We got a puppy, and she is taking up almost all of my free time. I've also sprained my shoulder, so typing is incredibly painful and it may be a bit before I get a full chapter together. I'm sorry for the

inconvenience.

#### 14. Chapter 14

It was the pounding in his head that finally brought his mind back to the present. Hiccup hadn't remembered falling asleep, nor anything that had happened after the reunion on the shore. Refusing to open his eyes and further the pain in his head, Hiccup focused on his other senses to try and figure out what was going on.

He could hear his own breath, heavy and slightly ragged, but after what he'd been through, he wouldn't expect anything different. He pushed the memories of the last few days to the back of his mind, not wanting to think about the horrors that had haunted not only his sleep, but every waking moment. He knew the scent of his surroundings, had known them since he had been just old enough to remember. The smell of wood and fire, he was home. Under his sore and beaten body he could feel his bed, his wool blanket pulled up over him. Relaxing, he was able to hear the sounds of distant voices outside, and another set of breaths very close to him.

Hiccup pushed open his heavy eyes, the green orbs seeing for the first time in days his own room. He'd been so sure that he would never be here again. There, by his side was Toothless, his large eyes looking intently at the boy whose side he had refused to leave.

"Hey bud." The boy smiled weakly, reaching out and petting the dragon under the chin. It had been Toothless who had pulled him out from the oceans clutches, saving his life. Hiccup shuddered at the memory of how close he'd come to finally giving up and dying. "Thank you." he whispered.

He didn't know for how long he simply laid there, his hands comforting the dragon whose presence comforted him back. All the while his mind let itself roam, going over what had happened and what was to come. He had been kidnapped, beaten and tortured... almost killed. He had betrayed the dragons that had given their trust to him, his people. At least if he had died, then they would have been able to forgive him, and he himself. He knew it was selfish, to dwell on his own easy escape from what had happened, but he didn't know how to face everyone once the relief of getting him back alive wore off.

It wasn't until he heard the door downstairs open and shut that Hiccup gritted his teeth and pushed himself up. Swinging his legs over the bed, Hiccup noticed that he had been changed out of his previous clothes, the dirty, blood stained pair laying in a pile near the door. He forced his eyes away from the discarded clothes as he watched his fathers shadow move closer to the open door.

"Hiccup?" He called out softly as he neared the room. The boy had been asleep nearly an entire day, and Stoick was worried about him. The medic had found no wound severe enough to have soaked his clothes in blood, but the amount on his clothes had kept him worried nonetheless. Stepping into the room, Stoick could see the quiet pain on Hiccup's face. "How are you feeling, son?"

Hiccup offered a tired smile to his father as he tried to hide the hurt from his features. "Sore." He replied simply. "Dad...?" His

voice softened as he turned his face away from his father. "I'm sorry."

"for what?" Stoick asked, turning toward his son with heavy, confused eyes.

"For getting captured, for helping the Outcasts." He gulped.  
"everything that's happened, its all my fault."

Stoick placed a think hand on his son's shoulder, sighing deeply. "It wasn't your fault Hiccup. Mildew betrayed all of us when he gave you to the Outcasts, it was out of your hands from there."

He hadn't known that Mildew had been found out, and with everything else he had almost forgotten about the old viking. "But I helped the Outcasts. I betrayed everyone here." Hiccup exclaimed, hiding his face from his father. "People died, Scarlette..." His voice trailed off as he felt the warm tears falling over his cheeks.

Stoick turned Hiccup around, forcing the boy to look at him as he spoke. "You didn't betray us. Alvin would have brought war here one way or another, and those we lost died in battle, the way all of us dream to. They died to protect Berk, and you. And from what I saw of their dragons, you didn't help them at all." Stoick smiled softly, hoping that he had eased Hiccup's mind. "Who's Scarlette?" Stoick asked, noticing Hiccup flinch at the name.

Hiccup shook his head, bringing his knees against his chest and wrapping his arms around them. Just remembering what had happened was so hard.

Seeing that Hiccup didn't want to talk about it, Stoick stood, his hand still on Hiccup's shoulder. "We send the dead off at sunset." He said, slowly stepping away from Hiccup. "I'm going to deal with Alvin now." He added darkly.

Hiccup knew the look on his father's face meant he was expected to go as well. He didn't want to see Alvin, not after everything that had happened. Even if he was receiving punishment for what he'd done. Hiccup sighed heavily and pushed himself to his feet, grateful that Toothless was there to steady him as he wavered. "Thanks." He whispered as together they followed Stoick out.

The entire tribe was gathered around the center of the village, each looking both relieved to see Hiccup relatively okay, yet solemn about what was about to happen. Hiccup followed Stoick to the end of the line, standing at the head with his father as Alvin was brought out in chains, lead by Spittleout and Gobber. The Outcast had dark bruises over his face, but he didn't look hurt at all. He walked forward, his eyes darkly intent on Hiccup, sending chills down the teens spine.

"Still alive?" Alvin chuckled. He didn't flinch as Gobber hit him upside the head.

"Alvin the Treacherous," Stoick said, his voice more full of malice than Hiccup had ever heard it. "You are sentenced to death, for your crimes against Berk, and its heir."

"You'll regret being alive boy. Nightmares the rest of your life."

Alvin smiled, ignoring Stoick and the second hit from Gobber.

Hiccup glared at Alvin, forcing his face to remain clam. He knew that he would always be haunted by what had happened, but he wasn't going to give Alvin the satisfaction of knowing it as well. 'At least I'll have a life.' He said strongly.

Alvin's face twisted into anger as he shook off the holds on him and lunged forward, intent on at least leaving the boy with more then mental wounds. The instant toothless saw him move he was on alert, his stance aggressive as he growled and summoned forth the plasma blast. Controlled at it was to not hurt any of the bystanders, it still hit Alvin hard in the chest, sending the Outcast to his knees.

As soon as Gobber and Spitlout had a hold on Alvin, Stoick stepped forward, determined to keep the action from being repeated. He waited until the others had brought Alvin near the fire, and pulled out his knife. An easy death would have been too merciful for the Outcast, and after what he had done to Hiccup, Stoick refused to let him go in anything other then pure misery.

Heating the blade, Stoick stepped closer to Alvin, making sure the others had a firm hold on him before he made the first cut. He made long, deep cuts on each of the Outcast's forearms, watching the blood spill before nodding to Astrid. She had insisted on helping, and he hadn't had the heart to deny her. She took the small shovel from the fire, two burning coals on its end and with careful precision dropped one into each of the cuts, watching the blood boil and the skin burn. Similar cuts were made to the Outcast's abdomen and upper legs.

Each time a coal was dropped beneath his flesh Alvin gritted his teeth, refusing to cry out or beg for mercy. He could feel his teeth breaking under the force, small shards falling down his throat, snagging the soft flesh and making him cough. He could taste his blood, could smell the burning flesh. Despite the agonizing pain, he kept his eyes on Hiccup's, his twisted grin leaving a horrifying image in the boys green eyes.

The last cut was made to Alvin's chest, Stoick pushed the blade in hard, watching as the Outcast jerked and spat blood. Adding pressure, Stoick felt the ribs crack, and pushed his hand inside, forcing the flesh to tear further. Before Alvin could slip out of consciousness, Stoick took the shovel from Astrid, offering it to Hiccup. Hiccup stepped forward, holding it with his father and together they dropped the last coal in, hearing the gurgled groan that passed from Alvin's twisted lips as his eyes finally closed.

Hiccup stepped away from Alvin, his tormenter was dead, his nightmare over. But he could still see that look of hate in his eyes, hear his voice. He followed his father and the others as Alvin's body was taken to the shore, to the last Outcast ship that remained. Piled upon its deck were the bodies of the Outcasts who had followed Alvin, the stench of decay and burnt flesh heavy in the air. Once Alvin's body was loaded onto the ship, the teen riders climbed onto their dragons and pushed the ship away from the shore, once it was far enough they set fire to it. No one stayed to watch it burn, to give any thought to the Outcasts as any trace of them was burnt away.

In steady precision the Hooligans moved toward the opposite shore,

where the bodies of their own had been taken. The families of the dead carried torches, and small bundles of personal possession cradled in their arms. Along the shore were fifteen small boats, rested upon each was a warrior who had fallen in the fight the day before. The majority of the Hooligans stood their ground on the shore, watching in respective silence as the families went to their own, laying the grave offerings among the bodies and whispering their final words. In near perfect unison, the head of each family pushed the ships from the shore, sending them into the sunset before lighting the ship aflame.

The flames steadily grew, oranges and yellows dancing against the soft blues and violets of the twilight sky. Within minutes she ships were completely ablaze, the wood crackling as it slowly began to sink into the placid waters below. Hiccup watched the ships burn, his eyes alternating between the ships themselves and their ever shifting reflections in the water. He'd been told he wasn't to blame for their deaths, that they had died with honor, as any viking ought to. But something within himself couldn't accept that. Even with that glory, their families still suffered the loss.

Hiccup stood watching for long moments after the ships had disappeared under the star spotted waters, whispering silent apologies and thanks to the deceased. Raising his eyes to the dark skies, watching the stars stare back, he started to feel more at ease with what had happened. He was alive, and he knew that feeling guilty about his life would dishonor the memory of those who had lost their own. It wasn't going to be easy, he knew that, but he refused to let it be impossible.

Toothless nudged Hiccup affectionately, trying to ease some of the hurt he could feel radiating from the boy. Hiccup had been through a lot over the last few days, and having been unable to be by his side, to protect Hiccup as he had protected him after they had first met was hard for the Dragon. He hadn't been able to save Hiccup from being taken, from suffering so much under the hands of Alvin, but Toothless swore on the skies that they flew together that he would remain by the boys side. Nothing would ever hurt him again.

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\*\*A/N: \*\*I am so sorry for the extended delay in an update! It took a while for me to decide just how I wanted this chapter to go, and this wasn't the first draft. The one before seemed too forced, and that just made it awful, to me at least. I want to thank everyone who was worried about the shoulder, it has healed wonderfully and I have full movement of it again. :) There will be at least one, maybe two more chapters to the fic, hopefully I will get them together soon.

SandyWolfGirl: The puppies name isn't Astrid. She's a heavy mix of Norwegian Elkhound, so we named her Freya, after the Norse Goddess of love, beauty, war and death.

## 15. Chapter 15

At first he didn't know where he was, only that he was terrified. Long moments passed before he let the fear ease and he slowly opened

his green eyes, finding himself again shackled in Alvin's dungeon. Thick shadows fell from the cold, stone walls as Hiccup pulled against the chains around his wrists, screaming for help. He couldn't be back here, not again!

Hiccup's eyes fell upon the lonely torch on the far wall, its fire growing weaker by the minute. Those flickering flames were the only thing keeping the darkness away, and once they were gone, he knew that things would only get worse. Pain and anguish radiated from the scars on his small body, leaving tears in his eyes as he waited for anyone to save him from the nightmare.

The footsteps in the corridor were so loud they hurt. Leather shoes beating harshly against a stone floor. Hiccup turned his eyes toward the barred door of his cell, letting hope wash over him as he continued to plead for help from the unknown person slowly approaching. His hope was replaced by dread as Alvin rounded the corner, his body was charred, but he was still smiling that twisted grin.

"No," Hiccup said under his breath, pulling against the chains so hard he thought his wrists would break. "You're dead, this can't be real!"

Alvin chuckled, unlocking the door and marching over to him. Within his battered hand was a small shovel with burning coals upon it. "I promised you there would be nightmares." He laughed.

Hiccup pressed himself against the cold wall, feeling its rough edges press into his back. Just a nightmare, he told himself. He could feel the heat from Alvin's coals against his skin, Alvin's free hand grabbing him around the arm as the thick fingers pressed into his skin. Wake up! Wake up! He begged as tears fell over his cheeks.

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The scream caught in Hiccup's throat as his eyes widened. His body pushed itself up, and his cloudy eyes searched the room to make sure that he was home. The brief relief did little to settle the anxiety the nightmare had caused. He'd been having them for the last few days, and every night he woke up fighting back the screams burning in his throat. Stoick was all ready worried, and Hiccup didn't want to cause his father any more pain.

Toothless looked up from his spot on the floor, his curious eyes searching Hiccup's pained face. The dragon hardly slept at all anymore, his nights spent watching Hiccup toss and turn. He liked to be awake when Hiccup awoke from his nightmares, ready to comfort his rider. Pushing himself up, he walked slowly across the floor to Hiccup's bed, resting his tired head on Hiccup's lap.

"I'm sorry for waking you," Hiccup murmured, petting the dragon with shaking hands. He didn't know if he'd ever be able to express just how much having Toothless by his side meant to him. In the days since Alvin's execution he had hardly left the house, preferring to be alone as he tried to deal with what had happened. The other teens had come to visit him, but he'd pushed them away after only an hour, claiming to be tired. They could have been killed in that battle against the Outcasts, and it would have been his fault. How could he

look at them and smile, knowing that his betrayal could have killed them? To walk the roads of Berk, seeing the faces of the families that had lost family to that battle. As honorable as their deaths had been, it was still his fault.

Toothless lifted his head, gazing into Hiccup's moist eyes as he offered a soft grin, trying to cheer the boy up. His tail swept across the floor, waving gently in front of Hiccup. They hadn't flown together since Hiccup had come back, and Toothless missed those moments terribly. He was sure that if Hiccup would climb on his back, and try to get back into the flow of life, he would start to feel better. A quite, playful growl erupted from the dragon's throat as he waved his tail again, nodding his head in hopes that Hiccup would agree.

Hiccup offered an empty smile to the dragon as he wrapped his arms around himself and turned toward the window. The sun was just coming up, the sky lit in gentle shades of ink and blue. It was a beautiful morning, but he didn't feel like a part of the outside world anymore. "I don't belong out there." He whispered.

Toothless shook his head, snorting as he closed his teeth over Hiccup's sleeve and began dragging the teen out of bed. No more mopping, that wasn't the Hiccup he knew. Toothless ignored the protests as he carefully forced Hiccup down the stairs and towards the door. He let go of Hiccup's sleeve, his eyes alternating between the door and Hiccup's face, his grin widening.

Hiccup looked to the door, a door he'd seen countless times over the years of his life. Every time he'd seen it, it had been nothing more than a door, just wood. But now, now it was an obstacle that he didn't want to challenge. Outside of this seemingly simply device was a world of people that he had let down. If he stepped outside, then they would see him not as the heir they had grown attached to, but as the useless child he'd been before. The klutz that had endangered them, betrayed them, and gotten their loved ones killed.

Shaking his head, he whispered an apology to Toothless and turned back toward the stairs. Afraid of what they would see in him, of the anger he was so sure they held against him. Toothless growled, slightly annoyed before latching onto the bottom of Hiccup's shirt and pulling him back to the door.

"Toothless, I said no." Hiccup grumbled. His words did him no good as the dragon persistently dragged him across the floor, nearly pinning him to the door. Hiccup knew that he was defeated, that Toothless wouldn't give up until they had left the house. It was still early, so, maybe, no one else would be out there? "Fine," Hiccup gritted his teeth, feeling his anxiety rise as he opened the door.

Berk was quiet, almost no one was out yet and the sun was still just a distant speck on the horizon. Smoke crept from chimneys, yawning as it disappeared into the remaining darkness of the sky. Hiccup followed Toothless around the house, grabbing his saddle and attaching everything quickly. He just wanted this to be over, so that he could go back to his room and feel safe.

Toothless waited until Hiccup was settled into the saddle before offering a quick, reassuring nod to the boy. Then, without hesitation Toothless pushed forward, running a few feet before jumping off from

the ground and into the air. That first rush of cool, morning air chased away the remaining sleep from Hiccup's body, putting him on alert as he held on tighter.

It seemed like years had passed since the last time the exhilaration of flight had coursed through Hiccup's veins. The feel of the morning air drifting through his hair as he closed his eyes against the stinging cold. The sudden warmth against his cheeks he knew, were tears. Alvin had taken so much from him, his sense of security, the life he had known. He had almost taken these moments as well, but Toothless had been the one to fight for them. Hiccup patted Toothless' shoulder, murmuring thanks as they flew over the ocean waters. He didn't know how to get everything else back, but he was more than thankful for what Toothless had given back to him. This was theirs, and nothing could truly take that from them.

As Toothless began to grow tired Hiccup shifted their direction, flying effortlessly back to the small cove where they had began their friendship. After a graceful landing, Hiccup pushed himself off of Toothless and fell onto the sand as he watched the dragon take long, greedy drinkings from the placid water. Everything that had happened had been because he had been different from everyone else. Instead of killing the dragon, he had become his friend. That bond between them, Hiccup wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. Toothless might have died without him, and he knew that he would have died without Toothless.

Hiccup shifted, looking at the nearly faded bruises on his wrists. His father had told him that the people of Berk didn't blame him for the battle with the Outcasts, that those they had lost had died gloriously in battle. It was the way of his people, their greatest desire. All the guilt in the world couldn't change their stubborn minds, and just like they couldn't take the thrill of flight from him, he supposed that he couldn't take the glory of battle from them.

But not everyone he had lost had wanted to die in battle. The Gronkle that Alvin had slaughtered, and Scarlette... Even on his clean clothes he could see her blood soaked into the fabric. A distant roar tore his attention away from his memories as he watched Stormfly circle over the cove, Astrid on her back. For a moment Hiccup considered jumping onto Toothless' back and flying away as fast as he could. Stormfly was nearly as fast, but he was sure that he could get enough of a start to get home and lock himself away.

Before he could finish thinking out what to do Stormfly descended and landed with perfect ease. Hiccup didn't get up as Astrid jumped down from her dragon, a somber relief on her face as she looked down at him. He'd been avoiding her since he'd been home, afraid of how she would see him after what had happened. He was weak, just as hopeless as he had been before meeting Toothless. When she realized what a joke he was, he knew that she would leave him.

Astrid said nothing as she looked down at Hiccup, his broken expression bringing tears to her eyes. Without warning she fell to her knees, pulling him against herself as she hugged him so tightly she thought she would break him. It took everything she had to push away from him, staring into his own green eyes with her hurt, blue ones. "Why have you been avoiding me?" She demanded.

Hiccup could only stare at her as he tried to form words that chase the sadness away from her eyes. All of that pain was because of him. "I'm sorry," He murmured, knowing that it wasn't enough.

"Are you mad at me?" Astrid fell onto the sandy shore, waiting for the answer.

"Why would I be mad at you?" He asked, clearly confused.

Astrid pulled her knees up against her chest, holding them tightly. "Because I didn't stop Alvin from taking you. If I hadn't taken so long to go back to Mildew's house, then I could have saved you." She closed her eyes, letting the tears fall over her cheeks as she tried to breath. "There was so much blood on you, so much pain in your eyes." Her hands clenched into fists as she hit the ground. "All because of me."

Hiccup shook his head, carefully taking one of her hands into his. "It wasn't your fault." he assured her. "That blood," He shuddered, his voice dropping into a whisper. "It wasn't mine."

"Then whose?" She asked, wanting to know. She would do anything she could to help him, to fix that broken smile she missed so much.

Hiccup took a deep breath, exhaling slowly as the memories raced through his mind. If he had to tell anyone, it would be her. Hours passed as he told her about waking up bound in Mildew's house, about Alvin's dungeon and the things that had happened. He had to stop as he told her about Scarlette and the sacrifice she had made. For the entire time he was speaking Astrid remained silent, listening in quiet horror as he told her about everything from the moment he'd been taken until this morning. With tears in her eyes she pulled him back into her small, strong arms, feeling his body shake against hers.

"It wasn't your fault." She assured him. "You did everything that you could, and you were so brave,"

Hiccup knew that her words were true, deep inside, he had always known. It had taken hearing them from her to make them right in his mind and he didn't know how to thank her. He'd been so consumed by his own hurt and guilt that he hadn't tried to move past it, but seeing her own pain, made some of his seem so insignificant. "Thank you," he whispered, pulling out of her arms and wiping away her tears.

Looking into her eyes, the rest of the world fell away. All of the negativity he'd been feeling melted as her own warmth flooded through him. Hiccup leaned forward, wrapping his arms around her and pressed his lips against hers. In that one kiss he felt his bruises and scars become nothing more than phantoms of his memories. It was all behind him now, and all that mattered was what he would do next. He could wallow in his own misery and let Alvin win, or he could rise above it.

With Astrid and Toothless by his side, he knew that he would have the strength to move forward and conquer the evil that had cast his life into darkness. With his father's help, he would lead the people of Berk with the strength everyone else had begun to see in him. He had

conquered dragons, chasing away their evil and bringing peace to his home. Surely, he could defeat his own demons and rise above the darkness they had left behind.

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\*\*A/N: \*\*I am so very sorry for how long this took me, but while I was working on Reverie, I couldn't focus on anything else. Thank you so much to everyone whose stuck by this story and its scattered updates, I hope that this chapter hasn't disappointed you. \*\*Thank you\*\* to everyone who has read it, left words behind, and continued to support it in its wait to be completed.

End  
file.